Wonderdays and Wonderways through Flowerland

Grace Tabor

Class PZ8

Book T114W

Copyright No.

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

Wonderdays and Wonderways Through Flowerland

They finally managed to reach the chamber wherein was the basin of which she had spoken with such delight.

Wonderdays and Wonderways Through Flowerland

A SUMMER ADVENTURE OF ONCE UPON A TIME

BY

GRACE TABOR

Author of "The Garden Primer," "Old Fashioned Gardening," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

RHODA CAMPBELL CHASE

NEW YORK
ROBERT M. McBRIDE & COMPANY
1916

PZ8
.T114
W

Copyright, 1916, by
GRACE TABOR

Published October, 1916

$1.50

DEC -1 1916

©CL.A453063

no 1.

TO
THAT DEAR CHILD WHO STILL DELIGHTS
IN MAKING FACES AT THE
KITTEN

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	The Spell of the Bubble	1
	Introductory.	
II	Bad Earth and Good and the Little Prisoners of Hope	24
	Seeds and Sowing.	
III	Hunger Walks and Famine Stalks	54
	Fertilizing.	
IV	Outlaws and Overlords	79
	Pruning.	
V	The Roystering Buccaneers	110
	Pests.	
VI	A Dim Knight of Darkness and the Silver Tongues of Day	138
	Allies of the Gardener.	
VII	The Caskets of Enchantment	165
	Bulbs.	
VIII	The Sleeping Legions and the Magic Dust . .	187
	Pollination and Fruiting.	
IX	A Far Land and the Going Hence	217
	Winter Care.	
X	Through the Rainbow	239
	Conclusion.	
	A Glossary of Names	263
	Lists of Plants for Children's Gardens . . .	265

List of Illustrations

They finally managed to reach the chamber wherein was the basin of which she had spoken with such delight

Frontispiece

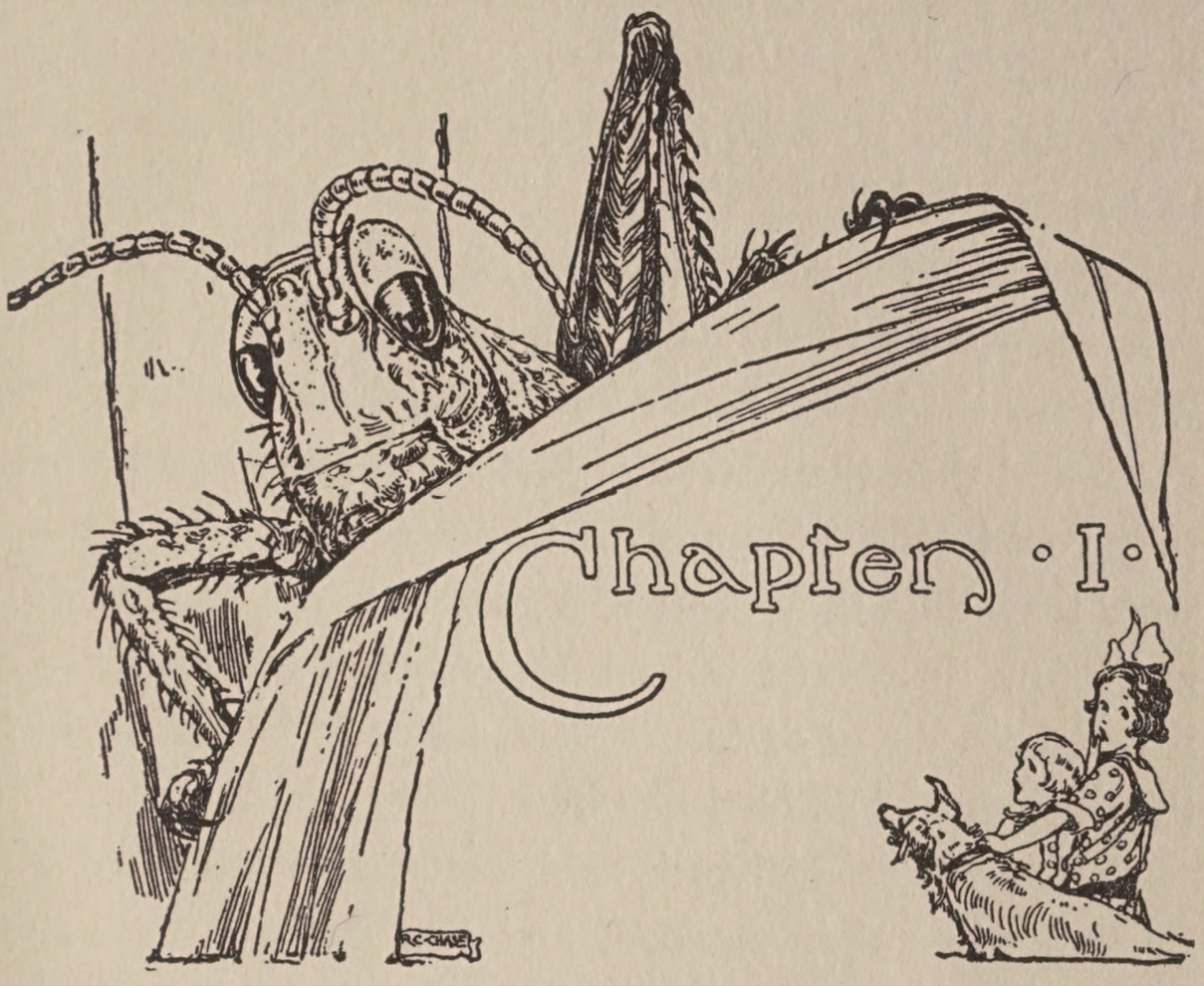
FACING PAGE

Into the air he soared and away over the meadows and roads and woods . . . and then they came on such a funny pair 112

"Well," said Sir Bufo, blinking, "it's hardly that, my dear—hardly that." 148

Wonderdays and Wonderways Through Flowerland

Wonderdays and Wonderways Through Flowerland



THE SPELL OF THE BUBBLE

DOWN, down, *down,* for the longest distance, they felt themselves slipping—or was it *in* that they were rushing? They could not be sure whether it was down, or in—for you see, they hardly knew the journey had begun, before it was over.

This was partly because they were so absorbed in watching the soap-bubble Billy had just blown—a beautiful one, and quite the largest they had ever seen. It

floated nearer and nearer to them, until at last they could see quite plainly the lovely miniature world reflected in it. And Betty said "Oh! Don't you wish we could go right up into it, Billy?" as she always did when she looked at a bubble.

For a minute—or perhaps only a second or two really—it seemed as if they were actually going to get her wish; for the bubble kept coming closer still. But right there and then their strange journey began; and before they could collect themselves to notice which way they were traveling, they came to a gentle stop. So they did not know then—and indeed never found out—whether it had been down or in. It had seemed like down; but then too, it had seemed like in.

"Why, where are we?" said Betty, as she looked all around when they stopped, and saw nothing that she had ever seen before in her life—or so she thought at that instant. "Where is this place, do you suppose, Billy? Isn't it queer?"

She still had hold of her brother's arm, just as she had clutched it with a squeal of delight when the bubble first came back from high up in the summer air where they thought it quite lost. And 'Patkin, the great deer-hound, who came every day to play with them, was right there close beside them, just where he had stood, watching it too. But not another thing was the same!

Instead of being under the old apple tree beside the garden, which was their favorite play spot, and where they had come to-day to watch Alec, the gardener's helper, they were in a forest! What is more, it was a forest stranger than any they had ever heard about, or read about, or dreamed of—a tangled, thick forest, all of just one kind of tree; and that was the queerest tree surely, that ever mortal saw—for it had no branches nor leaves whatsoever! It was all green trunk, long and straight and tapering. Many were broken over, some high up, others low down, resting this way or that. But more than they could ever hope to count stood upright, fresh and strong.

Nowhere in sight, either, was Billy's chair, from which he always climbed down after Betty had wheeled him out in it. Yet it had stood right there, just behind them. Strangest of all, though!—the buildings of the Orphanage had disappeared, too—every one!

Betty took all this in with just one glance around, for that was her way—quick and keen and watchful. Then she clutched her brother's arm a little more tightly than before, partly because she was so surprised and startled herself, and partly because it was another of her ways to look after Billy and keep things from frightening him. Billy was younger than she was, for one thing; and then you see, Billy was lame. So of course

an older sister would always have been careful for him —and Betty was even more careful than ever, since they had come to live with so many, many other children in the big building that was their part of the Orphanage.

Slowly Billy's big brown eyes took in all that Betty's blue ones had discovered in a twinkling, growing wider and rounder with surprise every minute. Then he suddenly held up his hand with something in it, and looked at it; and Betty looked too. It was Alec's pipe, that had blown the wonderful bubble,—the bubble which floated lightly away and then came back to settle over their heads.

"Oh," she said, "what will Alec say? He'll be back any minute."

They both looked around, in the direction Alec had gone; but on every side now there was the strange forest, through which they could not see. It was very queer—and very scary, too. There was no use denying that. Betty put her other hand upon the dog's collar, and clung to it tightly.

"I wonder what became of the pail," said Billy, slowly, as he looked over their surroundings once more. "Did Alec take it?"

Sure enough, *that* was gone, too—the pail with the soap-suds in it, which Alec used to wash the flowers' faces; or so he *said*. They always knew, of course,

that he did not mean just exactly some of the things which he said, for he was full of such impossible talk. It was fun to hear it, though, so they played about near him whenever they could, to listen. And nearly always he would give them his pipe to blow bubbles—that is, if he had come to wash faces. Sometimes he came to put on what he called freckle lotion; and that meant that it was not soap-suds in the pail that day, but something that did not smell a bit good—and they could have no bubbles.

They had not moved out of their tracks since this curious thing had happened to them; but now Betty took a step or two forward, to peer around the trunk of a particularly big tree that was just beside her. And then she drew back quickly with a frightened "Oh, goodness!" And 'Patkin, seeing what she saw, stiffened and growled, and the hair all along his neck raised angrily.

"Oh, Billy!" she said to her brother, "don't—don't you b-b-be frightened!" Her own teeth were chattering with terror, and she could hardly keep from running away—but of course Billy must not know that. "Don't mind him, Billy. It—it's just an awful *looking* kind of a monster,—b-b-but I don't think he will hurt us. Not with 'Patkin here to take care of us."

The monster was standing on the bent down top of

one of the trees, which swayed under his weight, eyeing them with a kind of distant and indifferent curiosity —if there can be such a thing! How long he had been there Betty had no idea; all of the time they had, possibly. He did not look surprised, at any rate.

Neither did he look threatening. That is, his expression did not seem threatening to her. Rather, it was mildly interested. His monstrous round eyes that set out from his head almost as our ears do from ours, gave him a kind of foolishly bland look. Still, his great ugly, crooked legs and his horns—which he waved over his head in a startling fashion, considering that a cow never moves hers at all—made them shudder.

"Ugh!" shivered Betty, drawing back still more as she stared into those eyes, fascinated. "Oh, Billy! He —he's *terrible,* isn't he?"

Billy was not able to speak at all, for the spectacle which the creature presented; but he nodded vigorously. 'Patkin growled again, and stretched his head out towards him and sniffed the air, raging and yet restrained by Betty's hand on his collar. The monster moved slightly, taking a step along the trunk of the broken down tree, still staring at them with his goggling eyes. They were not quite sure about his mouth—which was some comfort! *Perhaps* it was not so bad after all, as they somehow felt that it must be! But they dared not

stir; and he did not, for what must have been an age, during which he just kept staring and staring.

"Oh-h!" shivered Betty again at last, in spite of herself.

"Oh-h!" repeated the monster in a rasping voice, mimicking her it seemed, as nearly as he was able, "what queer things!" Both children gasped at this—and who would not? "Where did you come from?"

"Why—where did *you* come from?" asked Billy, surprised into speaking.

"I!—*I?*" He came along several steps of his several legs, and looked down on them sharply from his high perch, his broad face still wearing the same unmoved look, however. "Why, *I,*" he fairly roared now—he was evidently getting excited,—"*belong* here. This is my home, my domain, my kingdom, if you will—if you understand *that.*"

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Betty quickly and very politely, "we understand, exactly. We didn't mean to be inquisitive, you know, only my brother and I were wondering—"

"Wondering what?" snapped the monster, one of his horns turned over towards them accusingly, it seemed to her.

"Why, wondering what place this was. We—we don't know."

"Why, yes, you do! I've just told you." He stared harder than ever.

"Oh, yes, of course. *Now* we know."

"*Well,* then—?"

"But we didn't—till you told us." She was being very brave, but in her secret heart she was just sick with fear of him—the great, horrible thing! Oh, where *was* Alec? Why didn't he come? What should she do? How get Billy away from here? How ever find their way back home?

She looked this way and that through the trees, then back at the monstrous sort of egg-shaped face so nearly over their heads. Its pop-eyes stood out so far that they did not have to move at all in order to see everything, behind the beast as well as on every side. He was green in color, all over—brighter green in some places than in others, and with some red here and there—but nearly all green; and as she studied him a little more closely, she saw that what she at first thought was smooth green skin, was really great plates of shell or something like it, that were jointed to fit his clumsy form very cleverly. Two, four legs she counted; and then, "My goodness!" exclaimed she, without meaning to. There was *another* pair, further back—enormous long legs that humped way up above his back so high that even the tips of his horns did not reach any higher!

"Your what?" he asked, impatiently.

"Nothing—nothing at all!" answered Betty; "that's just an expression."

"You're a queer outfit," said he, twisting around sidewise a little, and chewing his jaws on nothing at all apparently—and oh!—they *were* terrible jaws! "Never saw any of *you* before."

Not knowing what to say to this, they kept still, though Billy would have spoken if Betty had not squeezed hard on his arm.

"What do you live on?"

"Why—why," stammered Betty, quite taken aback by what was, after all, a very simple question, "on—eggs, and—and oatmeal, and milk—and meat for dinners ordinary but chicken on Sunday."

"Eggs! Oatmeal! Meat!" he snorted—or it would have been a snort if he had had a better nose, "what are they? Where do they grow?"

They looked at each other helplessly. *"Where do they grow?"* he demanded again, raising his voice so that it fairly tore the air all about.

"Why—why, we don't know, do we, Billy?"

"Eggs grow in the nests out beside the barn," said Billy, "but I don't know about the oatmeal. And meat grows—why, meat grows—in the refrigerator."

"Bah!" said the monster scornfully, "you're fools!

Nothing that you say has meaning. Food grows out of the earth—except for those of us who live on each other."

They clasped each other close at this, huddled over the dog; for they were sure that this could only mean they were to be devoured themselves, when it suited his good pleasure. 'Patkin, observing a sudden movement on the part of the abominable creature, drew back his lip and showed his fangs, glaring at him. But Betty still held him fast!

"Bah!" said the monster again, folding his great last legs up more and more closely till they stuck further above his back than ever, "you don't know anything! You're as bad as human beings."

"Why, that's what we are," cried Billy, a little bit indignantly in spite of the fear of him.

"O—ho! Then *that* accounts for it. But I don't think I believe you. You are too little."

"That's because we are children," Betty explained. "Billy's only six and I'm only 'leven. We have to grow up yet."

"Mm—hum. Well! Maybe. It doesn't matter." And with that he gave a sudden spring into the air, away high up; and landed on the ground right before them—which frightened them nearly to death, naturally! They clung to each other and to 'Patkin more closely

than before; and in spite of biting her lip until it hurt her cruelly, Betty cried out faintly.

But instead of approaching nearer and striking them down, the monster turned away and began to search for something apparently, among the great trees. Of course they never took their eyes off him; but he paid no further attention to them for some time—not until he had found what he was hunting, and eaten it, with a great chanking and chewing. And if you will believe it, it was no more nor less than a young tree itself—a tender specimen of the general growth! He made away with it in no time; and then he came over towards them again, walking now along the ground.

"Oatmeal," he said reflectively, looking at one and then the other and then at 'Patkin; "oatmeal. *Oat* meal —that *may* have something to do with it. If I thought it had!—if it is—!"

Now the time had surely come, they knew—now he would either seize them and bear them away to his den, wherever that might be; or he would open his great jaws!— And just then he *did,* waving one horn furiously. And they saw away into his awful mouth, where he clashed his teeth together, *sidewise,*—as if they were hands which he was clapping!—and ground them, making a hideous sound and frothing a brown froth through them.

"Oh," screamed Betty, "oh, please, Mr. Beast! We haven't done anything to be angry about! Please, *please* go away and leave us. We will do anything you say—only don't kill us and eat us, Billy and me—and 'Patkin! We can't do any harm!"

He stopped his threatenings almost as suddenly as he had begun them; but whether for what she said, or for the presence of another, more terrible looking, the children at first thought than himself, they had no idea.

"Humph!" he said shortly, after he had stared at the newcomer in his strange, bland way; and then he turned and went to hunting again, and soon was eating another tree.

"What's all this, what's all this?" said the new arrival, with a brisk, keen air that somehow made Betty feel he could not be as wicked as he looked. "What's going on? What did I hear said about killing? And eating?"

"Oh, if you please, I said don't kill us and eat us," she cried, "we haven't done anything. We didn't mean to come here, either—and if you'll only show us the way, we'll go right straight home. But we can't find it ourselves—and we don't know how we got here—and oh, if you p-p-*please,* Mr.—Mr.—"

"Some call me a Gryllus," said he not unkindly, looking at her with the same kind of a twist to his head that

old gentlemen have when they look over their spectacles, though he had no spectacles on.

"Mr. Gryllus, sir—if you please, it's all terrible! And I am to blame, if we've done anything, for I take care of Billy, because he's lame and younger; but I don't see how I ever brought him to such a place as *this!* And we both want to go home, oh—*so* much!"

"Home? Where is your home?"

"At Meadowview Orphanage now, Mr. Gryllus—since mother died."

"Oh, yes; quite a little distance from here. I know it."

"Oh, you do? Then please tell us how to go. I can carry Billy some of the way; and he can walk quite well, really—only we have to go slowly."

"Not so fast, not so fast!" The black eyes of the new beast shone like jet as he looked at her.

"No," she answered tactfully, mindful of offending him, "not so very fast. That's what I meant."

He looked at her again, and she thought he laughed—or would have laughed if his hard, shining black face had been able to wrinkle. It was as immovable as the face of the first creature; but after all, it had not such a sanctimonious, unpleasant expression. And though his form was something the same, yet it was different in many ways—somehow less hideous, even though its

covering was black as a coal and as shiny, and it seemed, as hard. It was trimmer and neater, she could not help but feel.

"I meant to say that I don't know about telling you how to go there," he explained, "it's one thing to know a place, and another to tell somebody else how to go there. And I visit it seldom."

"But you do visit it? Really and truly? Have you ever been there?" Here *was* a discovery! These were the monsters that came around looking for bad children, without a doubt!

"Rarely," said he, "rarely."

He whirled around for some reason or other, so suddenly that it made them jump, and peered off into the forest depths. He had horns, too, which he wiggled constantly, in a much more lively fashion than the green beast had moved his; and one of them just now reached over so far that its tip brushed against them. It too was covered with the black cover, but at the tip it was flexible it seemed, and jointed. His legs—he had six also!—were armed with dreadful looking spikes that would cut terribly, Betty felt sure, if they happened to strike one; and altogether he was pretty terrible—but not so fearsome as the first, nevertheless. She fell to thinking, trying to remember if she had ever seen a picture of any animal, anywhere, that was like him—or

like either of them. She was sure she had not; and yet there was something about this really splendid, shining and seemingly good-natured monster, that reminded her of something. What could it be?

Another quick move and he had turned back again, towards them; but he kept one of his horns backward, over his left shoulder. "You aren't very safe here," he said shortly, "though I don't know who is going to touch you. But you aren't."

Just at that instant, as if to bear out his words, they heard, deeper in the jungle, some great thing passing, crashing over the undergrowth and hurrying along. And the next instant there appeared in the distance, in another direction, somebody or something carrying a huge white bundle—some one hurrying faster than the children had ever seen anything hurry in all their lives, and coming straight toward them.

"Look out!" called the black beast—Mr. Gryllus, rather. And look out they did and jumped back, just in time to escape being bowled over; for in its mad haste the creature never looked to the right nor the left nor anywhere else, but just went straight ahead, unmindful of anything. They hardly saw what it looked like, it was gone so quickly.

"That's the way they always go it," said he, looking after it, "like all possessed!"

"What is it?" asked Billy.

"Oh, one of the Formicas," he answered, in a tone that showed he did not think much of them, "mad creatures, all of them."

They would have asked more questions; but over the tops of the tallest trees just then they heard a low humming sound, away in the distance apparently. It came nearer very swiftly, however; and both Billy and Betty, who had been to the Fourth of July celebration, said in one breath, "Aeroplane!"

Louder and louder it hummed up above,—a high, sweet sound which presently ended with a sharp little break, right over their heads.

They stretched their necks—the children and 'Patkin did, that is; Mr. Gryllus could see up as well as any other way without troubling, though he was not so pop-eyed as the green monster.

And there, away above them, higher up than the tops of the tallest, straight, leafless trees, Billy spied it, swaying from something to which it was caught, apparently.

"It *is* an aeroplane," he cried, "and they've had an accident!"

"Oh—is it falling?" gasped Betty, who had not seen it as yet.

"No, but it's stuck to something 'way up there. It can't go!—Oh, but now it can. See! It's going—now

it's going again. And—why, it's coming right down *here!*"

Sure enough, it did; and what is more, it was not an aeroplane! At least it was not the kind of aeroplane that Betty and Billy thought it was. No, indeed! But it was a flying machine, with wings that went up and down so fast you could not see them—brilliant, sparkling wings that looked like some wonderful spun glass, streaked with the most beautiful colors, outspread in the sun.

They folded when it came carefully down through the trees, until they were laid quite closely and neatly, against the sides of the fur-clad aviator who at last stood before them.

"Where," demanded this personage, as one accustomed to demand, greeting them all with a quaint dip of the body very much like a curtsey, "where do I scent the odor of the Hive Providers? Who is here?"

"Strangers, as you may see, Serenity," answered Gryllus, "perhaps they bear it about them."

Totally different in appearance from either of the monsters—a creature from another world it almost seemed—the aviator came right up to the little group of children and dog 'Patkin, and looked at them very intently, sniffing this way and that; then walked quite all of the way around them, whilst they dared not move but

stood breathless before what was perhaps a new danger that threatened.

"Where do you come from?" was the next question.

"We live at Meadowview Orphanage, if you please, sir," said Betty, faintly.

"'If you please, *miss*,'" corrected the aviator, a little crisply. Then, without waiting for her to speak again, "I thought so. These *are* humans, Gryllus; and as such, the special charge of my people, wherever they may be —but I must say I don't understand how in creation this has come about!" And she looked them over and over again, poised airily on what they at first thought were stilts, but later saw were her own long slender legs.

Betty knew it would be perfectly useless to try hiding anything from anybody who had such searching eyes as these that were fixed upon them. Indeed, it seemed to her that the creature was just *all* eyes—or about all eyes. And she found herself looking back into her own self, and thinking of all the things she had ever done that she ought not to have done. Somehow, it was as if her own conscience stood there before her, examining her; and though she had never in her life been a very disobedient or naughty or troublesome little girl, she did remember some things with a pang—and resolved never to do anything just like them again. Such was the effect of this steadfast, searching, wonderful gaze!

"Well—neither do I," said Gryllus, whirling about again, "but you'll take charge of them in any event, I suppose." He looked from one to another alternately.

The aviator nodded. "Oh, yes, of course we will," said she; then she gave a peculiar little call—a soft, trilling, musical sound, repeated several times over. In an instant they heard overhead the humming again—only this time it came from every direction at once, apparently, and grew louder and louder until their ears were fairly deafened by it. And out of the skies came more of the flying creatures—numbers and numbers of them, all steering straight for this one spot. Above it they paused an instant, then each descended just as the first had done, folding their great lovely wings carefully and landing so lightly that they hardly seemed to touch the ground.

The children could only stand and stare, still clasping each other and their playfellow and faithful friend. It was all too extraordinary to be realized. And yet what was there, Betty kept wondering, about these new and strange forms that reminded her of something? She could not tell—nor could she think what they reminded her of. It was all most puzzling, and made her head ache—but just then the first of the flying creatures began to talk to all the rest. Gryllus stood over at one side and listened, but took no part in the conference.

"Clansmen," said she, "a strange thing has happened, it seems; for here I have come upon two creatures as like our great and good Providers of the Hives as it is possible for creatures to be. Yet you see them, here amongst us on an equality with ourselves; hence, subject to all the dangers and the evils to which we ourselves are subject. I have taken them under the care of the clan, as of course is my plain duty; and I here call upon you all to stand by, and swear fealty and loyalty to that care. What say you?"

"Your Highness," one stepped out from the crowd to address her, "have you proof, may I ask, of their kinship with the Hive Providers? This is very remarkable!"

"Proof enough—as you and all of us, have—in the evidence of my own true senses. Do you not recognize the scent of these beings on whom we have depended so many ages for shelter?"

The speaker came over to them and examined them, just as Her Highness had done when she first arrived. "I do," she admitted at last, "in very truth, I do."

"Will you not all satisfy yourselves, as my sister the Princess Dulciana has just done, and as I did?" said Her first Highness then. Whereupon each and every one of the company came to them and looked them over in the same careful way, and walked all the way around them

—and then went back to their place, saying they were satisfied.

"And now, what say you?" came the question again, when the last had taken her turn.

The children could only look on, wondering what their fate was to be, as they had wondered so often in the last half hour.

"They are our guests and charges," answered one and all. "We swear the oath of fealty and loyalty. And with us they shall remain as long as it pleases them to do so—or until they are taken away."

"And may we not add that we count it a privilege to serve any of that tribe that have for so long served and tended ours?" said a voice from somewhere in the crowd. To which they all assented loudly.

Then Her Highness,—as they had called her—turned to the children and spoke to them.

"We have not questioned you to any extent," said she, "and we shall not. But whilst you remain here with us and dwell amongst these tribes and clans that are strangers to your tribe, there are certain rules which we must ask you to follow—for your own safety as well as for the law and order of the land. Are you ready to promise that you will?"

"Yes, indeed we are!" said Betty and Billy with one voice, "but oh, Princess!—for you are a Princess, aren't

you?"—she nodded, gracefully,—"will you not tell us where this land is?—and what it all means?"

"This land?" repeated the Princess, in a puzzled tone, "why, this is the only land there is, child! Here is the earth, under our feet; and here," she looked off and around the forest, "here is the sweet green grass. And overhead is the sky, hidden a good deal here by the taller grasses to be sure, but shining through in some places; and yonder, up there—see?—is a clover, on which we each alighted as we came here; and this is our good old friend, Cricket—or perhaps you are of those who call him Gryllus, which is his formal name; and these, my clansmen—or my clanswomen, speaking more exactly—you know them, surely!—the honeymakers, the singing workers of the kingdom of Apis—of which I have the honor to be a princess, daughter of the queen now reigning—Dulcinea, if you would know me by name."

"You're honey-bees!" gasped Betty, too full of amazement to think of being afraid of them, if the guess proved to be right.

"If that is what you name us, yes," answered the Princess, "we are the ones who gather nectar and turn it into honey."

"But how can that be? You—you're so *big!*—as big as we are." In spite of her own eyes and ears, Betty could not believe it.

"We are, indeed," answered the Princess, "or you are as small as we are,—which amounts to the same thing."

"Well, I *don't* understand it!"

"Neither do I," said the Princess, "but that doesn't alter the facts."

Chapter · II ·

BAD EARTH AND GOOD AND THE LITTLE PRISONERS OF HOPE

HOW to teach these two—Betty and Billy—to find their way about the neighborhood now that everything was so strange to them because of their being so tiny, was the first problem that the two princesses, Dulcinea and Dulciana, found before them. And it was a hard problem, as they very soon saw—and as you will see, too, when you come to think of it.

The children had not thought of the difficulties until Her Serene Highness Dulcinea was finishing what she had to tell them about what they were to do all day—or all the time they were alone. Of course she and her sisters had given some of their time to them; but it was hardly to be expected that such an interruption in a honey-bee's work could be allowed to last a moment

longer than was necessary. So they were to be left to their own devices, with very careful directions about everything. "And then you must watch, please," she finished—or started to finish—beginning to open and close her wings a little, to warm them up, "and be at the great foxglove on the Avenue of the Hives when the last Sunbeam leaves General Pinetree's head. I'll meet you there and—"

"But if you please," broke in Betty, interrupting because the princess seemed about to take wing at once in the midst of her own speech, "if you please, Princess, where is that?"

"Why, just beyond General Pinetree—toward the morning from him. He watches over the Hives you know."

"But General Pinetree, I mean. Where is he? And which way is morning?"

"Bless my soul," said the Princess, letting her wings droop in her surprise, "don't you know that?"

"No, Princess—we don't," said both children together, feeling very stupid and rather ashamed of themselves. To cover their ignorance as much as possible, Billy added, "He isn't anywhere around the Orphanage, is he, Princess?"

"Oh, dear no! He's quite in the other direction from here—over yonder." She pointed daintily; but of course

they could see no distance at all owing to the thickness of the jungle—I mean the grass!—though they looked this way and that, trying to see through, in the way she pointed. And fair Dulcinea was pretty nearly discouraged about them, when up spoke Mr. Gryllus, who had stayed around all this time, not being very busy. In fact Grylluses are seldom very busy; and so can just stay around, a great deal of the time.

"If you'll pardon me," said he, "I'd like to suggest something—or at least I'd like to tell you something which maybe you don't know—or haven't thought about."

"By all means do," urged Dulciana, quite as perplexed as her sister, and beginning to get pretty nervous, having delayed so long and not knowing how to dispose of these strangers.

"Well," said Mr. Gryllus, "I wish to call your attention to the fact that we have *three* visitors here—and that one of them is a creature nearer to ourselves than either of the others—though of course he is as different from us, really, as they are. Nevertheless, from what I know of him and of his kind, I am pretty sure that he has the solution of this whole business right in the tip of his long, slim, aristocratic nose."

"His nose!" said both Princesses together, in surprise.

And, "His nose?" said Billy and Betty as they looked at 'Patkin. Gryllus was looking at him too; and 'Patkin was looking at Gryllus. And thus they stood for some time, each measuring the other, it would appear. Then Mr. Gryllus spoke again, to the dog this time.

"You and your tribe," said he, "have companied with human kind for as many ages as I and my tribe have done. You have dwelt in their shelters from the time when they first learned to make shelters, even as we have. We have not been friends, your tribe and mine—for you hold us in contempt because of our size, and make playthings of us, and capture us and kill us, in your rough folly. But I bear you no grudge as an individual; your kind, according to their ways, even as my kind, and every other, according to their's. What I am getting at is this: —I know you well enough to know the power of the tip of your nose. It can be depended upon, my friend—aha, yes!—quite as fully as the smellers of these your protectors, the singing workers of the kingdom of the Apis—or Buzfuz, as some call it. *You* can find the way, anywhere!"

'Patkin studied him for a moment longer before he answered. Then he put out a paw and shook hands with him; and turned to Betty and said, with great dignity, "He is right—as of course you know."

"Well, then," said the Princess Dulciana, briskly,

"that makes everything all right—thank goodness! And now we must be off."

"And can you take us to the great foxglove on the Avenue of the Hives, 'Patkin, dear?" asked Betty, "do you really know where it is?"

"There is such an avenue," answered 'Patkin, his plumey tail waving, "in the garden of my Lady, whence I come daily to romp with you."

"Toward the morning from General Pinetree?" demanded Dulcinea.

"Toward the morning from General Pinetree," answered 'Patkin.

"Then it is the same. And we need have no further anxiety," said Dulciana, impatiently fluttering her wings.

" 'Tis some distance from here, though," said 'Patkin, "even for me. I fear it is a longer journey than my playmates can travel."

"Oh, there's no hurry," the Princess Dulcinea assured him. "See? The shadows are plump yet, and lie but a little toward the morning."

"But I think we ought to start at once," said Betty, mindful of her brother's lameness. "Oh, Billy! How I wish we had your chair."

Mr. Gryllus peered at them in his over-his-spectacles way when she said this; then he walked about a little

and took two or three jumps, carelessly—coming down with a tumble and righting himself as if he never noticed it at all, and didn't care whether he struck on his head or his feet. Then he began to talk, as if he were talking to himself. "I've a good mind," said he, hopping away and then hopping back, "I've a good mind to stay around and keep them company. I've nothing special to do."

"That would be more than good of you," said Dulcinea, quite gratefully, "I do hate to leave them unattended—'specially while they're so strange."

"Well—I'll see," said he, looking at them again, "I'll see. Anyway I'll show them the best route. This way, children—and Mr. 'Patkin."

Off they started—and away went their Serene Highnesses, Dulciana almost scolding over the delay in their work. But they were out of sight in no time—and almost as soon out of hearing.

"Won't go over this way," said Mr. Gryllus, turning a bit to the left, "bad place; wet. Might get mired."

"Where are we now?" asked Billy as the forest suddenly ended and they stepped out onto bare brown earth, "Oh!—I'll bet this is the g*arden!*"

"Humph! Maybe—if you mean the place where that MAN makes such a nuisance of himself, disturbing the ground all the time, and worrying it."

"Oh, Billy! That's just what it would seem like,

from down here where we are now—isn't it? That's what Alec *does* do—worry the ground," cried Betty, her eyes sparkling at the idea.

"Day in and day out he's at it," grumbled Mr. Gryllus, as he waited for them to catch up. "He puts in seeds, and then, fast as they grow, out he hauls the plants—then he puts in more, and hauls them out! If that's the doings of a sensible creature—well!" he ended with a snort, too disgusted to find words to finish.

They stopped to laugh out loud at this funny idea of Alec; and then suddenly, from right under their feet, they heard a little cry. "My goodness," gasped Betty, jumping, "who's that? Where are they? Oh—*dear!*"

They could not see any one, anywhere; but again came the sound—like some one down cellar, if they had been indoors.

"Oh," wailed the tiny voice—a voice quite as still and as small as ever the voice of conscience was—"oh—h, dear me! I never shall be able to get it open! I *never* can push hard enough! My head aches and my back aches and all of me aches and aches so now—whatever will become of me—whatever *shall* I do?"

"Oh, dear!" cried Betty again, in an agony of sympathy.

"How many warms and cools have passed?" asked a stiller, even smaller voice—such a weak, discouraged

little voice, as it trailed up from beneath them, that it seemed nothing more than a mist wraith dying.

"Ten," cried the first, "ten warms and eleven cools! And it hasn't given a bit!"

"Nowhere?"

'Nowhere!"

At this there came a perfectly heartrending chorus of soft little sobs, and thin little moans, and weak little cries; and Betty's eyes filled and her lip trembled, while 'Patkin looked hard at the ground, and laid a paw forward upon it, half a mind to try digging it up. "It is," cried Billy, "it surely *is* somebody down under here."

Mr. Gryllus looked on without saying anything, rather surprised, it seemed, at their getting so excited. At last Betty turned to him. "Can't you *do* something?" she asked tearfully, "whoever it is, we ought to *try* to get them out."

He waved his horns reflectively and sidled this way and that. "Pshaw," said he at last, "do you think so?"

"Good gracious! Of course we ought," said 'Patkin in astonishment, "every one knows that!"

"Why—we never do," was Mr. Gryllus' reply, in a most matter-of-fact tone.

"Why!" exclaimed Betty, "do these—these people, or whatever they are, often get into such trouble?"

"Oh, yes; it's happening somewhere all the time,"

answered he, "we hear 'em everywhere—and specially in certain places."

"How dreadful! Who are they?"

"That I cannot tell you. I only hear their voices. I've never seen any of them."

"Oh, dear," said she between a sigh and a sob, shocked beyond words to find out that such a thing was of common occurrence, "Oh, how terrible! The poor little things! The *poor* little things!"

Billy was down on the ground now, trying to loosen it; but it was not at all what he had supposed dirt to be, and he made very poor headway, even with 'Patkin's eager paws helping. In fact he could not get under even the largest of the small, queer, angular little stones—they seemed to be stones, anyway—which were wedged together so tightly that they made an even surface like cement; and the stick which he had found was no better than his bare hands or 'Patkin's paws, when it came to loosening them.

Betty watched them, her heart sinking lower and lower every minute—for they heard only now and then a faint lamentation from below. Most of the little voices were stilled—and she grew more and more fearful that they would never be able to reach them, whatever they were, while any were still alive.

She looked away over the bare earth, seeking some

other thing to dig with—and wondering, even as she looked, at the widely separated masses of green which grew out of it. Tufts of vegetables, she knew these must be; but they towered so high above her head and were so huge in every way, that she could not even guess what kinds they were.

Then suddenly Mr. Gryllus whirled himself about in the quick way that he had, and stood still an instant, horns quivering. And then he shouted in a voice that just made them tingle, "Quick! Out of the way! For your lives—it's the MAN!" and leaped high into the air as he did so, to escape the danger.

The ground trembled all around them with great, queer throbs that Betty knew afterwards must have been Alec's footfalls—and she too made a leap, seizing Billy and almost flinging him and herself toward Mr. Gryllus, knowing that he must have taken the safest direction; and shouting to 'Patkin, who also shouted to her—or barked at her.

And not an instant too soon were they! For right down where they had all been standing came one of Alec's feet—and it was almost if not quite as large as their part of the Orphanage! At least it was almost as large to them *now,* as their part of the Orphanage was to them when they were their regular size.

"Get over here, get over here," screamed Mr. Gryllus,

jumping up and down madly, "get away over *here!*"

Which they did as fast as their size and their terror would let them. And into a thicket of string bean vines he helped them breathlessly, till at last they were safely hidden and could look out and try to see Alec.

But he was so huge they could not, only in sections! Almost out of sight up into the sky he reached, hundreds of times as big as they were; and they just held their breath and clung close to each other as they looked.

"Oh—h!—suppose he had stepped on us!" gasped Betty, hugging 'Patkin on one side and her brother on the other. "Oh—he's a giant!"

"Keep close, keep close," warned Mr. Gryllus, "keep close into the shelter of the green stuff. They never tread on that—at least they never mean to. Of course they make missteps, sometimes; and personally I don't care to hang around a garden—if that's what you call these places. It never seemed to me worth while; but some don't feel so."

"Can't we get out of here, then," asked Billy, "right away?"

Mr. Gryllus signified not, with a gesture peculiar to himself. "Not much," said he, "not now! Not for anything! Lay low and keep *still.* Even our voices ought not to be heard."

"Why, Alec wouldn't hurt us," said Betty, "he's good and kind."

"My dear, don't you fool yourself. He'd smash us in a jiffy!"

"Oh, Mr. Gryllus! How can you say that? Alec is good and kind to everybody."

The shiny black eyes looked at her sharply, with a funny look. Then Mr. Gryllus answered in a low tone, "Is he? Oh, indeed! From *his* way of looking at it—possibly."

Of course she knew that he meant just the other way about; and then she remembered with a jump how Alec always said "Smash him!" whenever any kind of an insect came in sight. Good gracious!—how her heart sank,—for themselves this time. It was very cautiously, you may believe, that she looked out through the thick vines,—hanging on tight to both her companions.

Suddenly they heard a rumble, like distant thunder. "Ssh!" said Mr. Gryllus, "he's talking." And that is just what it was—Alec talking!—as they always expected him to, to the plants over which he was at work. It was a terrific racket, but they managed to make out what he said just the same. "Dead as doornails," roared over their heads, "those young 'uns ought 'a know'd better, after all I told 'em. Doggone it! Japanee seed, too. Seem's if they'd never learn nothin'!"

"It's the morning-glories," whispered Billy, "he's talking 'bout our morning-glories, I'll bet."

But what was he doing? They saw him bend down, then put out a great hand and begin tearing the earth loose right where Billy and 'Patkin had been trying so hard to start it.

"Yes sir! 'Tis them—for it's right where we put them," went on Billy, after another look, "for there's the fence, isn't it?"

Mr. Gryllus looked. "That is a fence I believe," said he, "at any rate, that's what I have heard MEN call a fence. And it's one I can't jump over, too—which is more than you can say of some of 'em."

"Then we were standing right on our very own garden," said Betty, getting excited. "Oh, who do you suppose it is down there under it?"

She hardly got the words out of her mouth before she almost shrieked at what she saw happening. "Look, look, *look!*" she cried, "do you see what he has done?"

Somehow Alec had lifted up a big layer of the hard baked soil, all in one piece; and there beneath it stood —and laid, alas!—an army of queer looking, pale, waxy seedlings, that had never been able to push their way through to the light!

For ten long days and eleven long nights they had tried and tried and tried; and now many of them were

quite dead—poor, distorted little things whose strength had at last failed, after the sufferings that they had endured as captives in a stony cell.

But there were a few that were alive, in spite of all; and when these gasped with delight at the sweet, pure air beating against their tired little bodies, and cried out to each other little cries of thankfulness for their release, as they lifted their heads slowly and started to straighten their poor aching backs, both Betty and Billy were so horrified at their part in the affair that they were ready to die of shame and grief.

"Oh, to think *we* did it," said Betty, "*we* put them there. Oh, the poor little things! What an awful place! Look, Billy—it's just like a terrible prison with stone walls; only they couldn't even turn around, and that's worse than it is in the jail at Springton. Oh, I'm so sorry! I'm going right over and tell them, as fast as I can."

"Are you a lunatic?" shouted Mr. Gryllus; then lowered his voice again at once, and whispered the rest. "You stay here where you are until the MAN goes away —and goes so far away that we can get out altogether before he gets back. Why, you wouldn't be worth *that!*" and he flicked a horn sharply.

"But we didn't mean to," said Billy, "we didn't know it was a prison, Betty."

"Not that it was a prison—but Alec said it wasn't good for them to go there." Betty was watching eagerly as Alec moved about. "I wonder why?"

"It's not a good place to bury a bone, I know," said 'Patkin, "or at least it's not an *easy* place to bury one. I tried it yesterday while I was waiting for you; and it quite tired me out, if you'll believe it?"

"He's taking them up, I do believe," cried Billy, "he's taking them up! See?"

"That's just what he's doing," said Betty, "what *is* he going to do?"

"What did I tell you," said Mr. Gryllus in a sing-song, "he puts 'em in and then he takes 'em out, he puts 'em in and then he takes 'em out—and he waters 'em whether it rains or not—sometimes, anyway. Once he almost hit me with one of his silly rain-showers! Oh, he's quite hopeless; he's as mad as a hatter."

Again the rumbling away up where Alec's head was. "You poor, pindlin' little things," he was saying, "I'll give you a chance for your lives, anyway—but I wouldn't take a copper for the whole lot of you."

In their tiny little voices the little plants answered him, telling him they would try to grow strong and prove their gratitude for the trouble he was taking with them; but it did not seem to Billy and Betty that such great ears as Alec's could possibly hear such soft and delicate little

sounds. Still, they remembered that he always had talked to everything in the garden; and he bent towards these pale little seedlings now as he carried them down the path. They were all standing in big lumps of earth which he had taken up just as he had taken the earth crust off in the beginning. Maybe he *did* hear them—and understand them. Certainly he acted as if he did.

"Where's he going to put them?" cried Betty. "I just must know! For we must go and tell them how sorry we are, and how it was a dreadful mistake, and ask them to forgive us. I can't be happy a minute until we do."

"You stay here," said Mr. Gryllus, "and I'll keep an eye on him. I can travel faster than you—and get out of the way quicker, if I have to. But I'll take good care he doesn't see me, be sure of that." And away he went, in such great leaps and bounds that it fairly took their breath to watch him.

Of course in no time he was out of sight—and then how very lonely and down-hearted they began to feel, almost instantly. "Dear me," said Betty, "I do hope he comes right back. I hope he doesn't stay long. I wonder—" she looked around fearfully, "I do hope there aren't any of those horrid green savage things around here!"

"So do I," said her brother, looking around also.

And "So do I," echoed 'Patkin, laying his ears down close to his head—a movement that made Betty think of Mr. Gryllus' horns, and the way they moved forward and back. She wondered if perhaps he heard with them as 'Patkin with his ears; but she was too anxious about his return to make the suggestion to Billy and 'Patkin just then. And then they spied him, within two or three jumps of them, coming very fast.

"It's quite exciting," he called out, "he's having a great time to set them free, after all; and I'll help you to get down there, if you'll promise to be very still and do just as I tell you."

Of course they promised, eagerly. And when he went on to say that it was just at the end of the fence and on the way to the garden of 'Patkin's Lady, Mr. 'Patkin jumped around with joy and barked and wagged his tail nearly off—almost forgetting that he could express his feelings any other way. It was so short a time that they had been able to understand his speech, you see.

Really it was a long way, considering that the children had only two legs to travel on, instead of four like 'Patkin, or six, which seemed to be the correct number generally, among the creatures all about.

But they kept going; and as every one knows, if one keeps going in any direction, one is bound to arrive sometime, however slowly they may move.

And at last they arrived; and Mr. Gryllus showed them where they could walk up hill along the stem of a honeysuckle that grew over the fence, until they got high enough to see nicely what Alec was about.

"So you thought you'd get the best of me, did you?" the gardener's helper was saying when they got within hearing, "so you thought I'd give up, did you? Well —you got left! That's what you got, you miserable little clods you! Strangle 'em, would you? Not muchy you won't! I'll fix you!"

It was a delicate job, I tell you!—making the bad earth that had so nearly killed them give up its hold on them. Really it seemed as if it wanted to tear them to pieces! The lumps of it dragged and hung at the baby rootlets, and if any one less wise and less gentle than big, clumsy Alec had tried to set them free, not a one would have had the ghost of a chance.

But Alec knew just how to go about it; just how to take carefully between his thumb and forefinger each wicked, hard little clay lump that still clutched a baby root fiercely; and just how to pinch that lump and roll it, without hurting the root in the least.

Patiently he worked and very slowly; but just the same he pinched without mercy—just as the earth had pinched the little plants—until every lump at last *had* to let go; which each one did in such a rage of wicked-

ness overcome, that they flew all apart in little puffs of dust!

And so the little plants were free, one after another; and as he got each one out, Alec hurried it in again—exactly as Mr. Gryllus had said that he did, you see!—only the earth into which he put the plant was very different indeed from the earth from which he had taken it. This they could see; and if they had not seen, they would have guessed it from the funny song he sang, in his great, rumbly voice, while he sifted it around the rootlets of one, and then another and another—and so on till all were replanted.

It was a song that the children remembered the tune of, for he often sang it as he worked; but never before had they known that it had any words.

THE WISE GARDENER'S SONG

"The earth is bad, I always know,
Where, three days after rain,
I take some in my hand—just so!
And squeeze it hard, and then let go,
And it sticks together like bread-dough!

When this is what I find,
I know it's not the kind,
Of place to put away
The tender seeds:—it's Clay!

But I am sure the earth is good,

When I squeeze it as I've said,
And it falls apart like breakfast food
That's dry—or just as if it would
Rather not crumble up, though it should:—

Wherever it's like this,
To sow is not amiss;
Such soil is just the home
Seeds like;—and it's called Loam.

"And so there you are, little folks," he said, as he finished the song and the planting together, "every leetle, teenty root snug in the softness of it. And now you shall have a drink,—then good-night."

With this he went and got the watering-pot and filled it, and then came and sprinkled them with a very fine, gentle spray that was more like a mist than a sprinkling. And then what did he do but spread an old umbrella over them!—"to keep the sun off you in the morning," he explained to the flowers, "for you ain't equal to his sharp eyes quite yet, my pretty little pale ones."

"Oh!—isn't he wonderful?" said the tiny little voice that they had first heard speaking down in the ground, as he went away. "He has saved us!"

"Oh—he has *tried* to save us," answered the weaker one, more faintly than ever, it seemed, "but whether I can live or not I don't know. I'm very, very feeble. And oh, the memory of that dreadful burning cell, and its horrible walls that pressed against me until I grew

all misshapen, like this! The more I twisted and turned and tried to get out, the more my tender body was warped! I don't know as it's worth while trying to live!"

"Come, come!" said the other, "don't be down-hearted. Brace up! We're free now, and out under the sky where we belong. Nothing's worth doing that isn't a struggle—and if you'll just try, you can forget all that, and get well and grow to be a great big strong vine. Just *try!*"

"Oh, yes—please do," urged Betty, who was hurrying down from the honeysuckle as fast as she could. With Billy to look after and Mr. Gryllus warning her every step of the way, lest she fail to be watchful, her pace was not rapid, yet she was soon standing before them.

"Please, please do, dear little Miss Morning-glory. For my brother and I are the ones who put your seed cradle down into that bad earth, and made you suffer so; and we are so sorry it seems as if we could not bear it. And if you don't live now, I don't think we can!" Her lip trembled and she choked; and sick as they were, all the little morning-glories looked up astonished.

"Well, I never!" gasped the weak one as they came closer to her, "but if you feel as badly as all that, why of course I will try. Still, it was careless of you. How could you do it?"

"It was my fault," said Billy, "Betty said put you there 'cause it wasn't so far for me to have to walk. I'm lame, you know. And so we did, even after Alec said it wasn't a good place. We thought it didn't matter to seeds—at least not very much."

"Well it does," said the little morning-glory, smiling a sad little smile, "it's life and death to them, little boy. Don't forget that, ever."

"How very queer," said Betty, "when we always thought that dirt was just dirt."

Mr. Gryllus made a sound that might have been a laugh and might have been a grunt; and then he pointed toward the earth where the plants now stood. "You can see for yourself, surely," said he, "that there's a great difference."

Of course they could; for here it looked very much like Rocky Point Beach, as Billy said. Big stones and little, all the way from the size of a chestnut to the size of their fists, were all about here. In the other part of the garden all the stones were very, very small. Being large, these laid loosely against each other instead of wedged together, as the others were. All among them were pieces of logs—stumps and broken off bits, some large, some small—very much like the crumbling tree trunks that are always scattered through the woods. All of these were quite soggy and moist, though it was

not raining. Really it was a great surprise, to see how the dirt really looked—and the difference in it in different places.

"Of course," said little Miss Morning-glory, speaking with much feeling, "of course this seems not so good to you, perhaps, as the other—for it is not smooth to your feet. But for us it is, oh, so much better! Earth that is like that other holds us, you know—for our strength is puny after all, even though we do push our way up into the sunlight with our heads, and down to the cool depths with our roots, when we are in the right place. But we are so tiny and fragile when first we wake, rolled close in our seed-cradles, that unless it is in good and kind and gentle earth that we find ourselves, we must perish. It must yield to our soft entreaties gladly and willingly; not hold us in such a cruel grip and hurt us so!"

Betty reached out a hand and touched the little plant, gently caressing it. "Oh, I'm so sorry!" she said again. "Will you forgive us? We didn't know."

The little morning-glory smiled again, more cheerfully this time. "Yes, of course," she answered, "but you ought to know: don't you think so?"

"Indeed I do," answered Betty earnestly.

After a moment the morning-glory said, "Well then, I'll tell you what you do. Sit right down here and I'll teach you our favorite lullaby. If you remember it, and

remember the gardener's song that you just heard him crooning over us, you'll know a good deal."

"That will be splendid," cried Betty; and she made Billy and 'Patkin sit right down, and sat down herself, for the lesson.

"It's very short," said Miss Morning-glory, "it won't take you long, I'm sure." Then she said it over once by herself; then line by line and they said it after her. And, sure enough, they knew it in no time!

LULLABY OF THE SEEDS

"One, two and three,
Sift over me,
An earth-blanket three times
As thick as my cradle,

When you have laid,
This where you've made
The earth fine and mellow
Down deep as you're able."

"You see," explained another of the morning-glories, "we are very sound asleep when our cradles are put into the ground. But we soon wake up; and then we begin to creep out, and to push our way up, and up, and up. There are such wonderful things waiting for us!—sunlight, and sweet rain, and tender little breezes, and blue skies and white clouds. Somehow we know they are there—and we can hardly wait, we are so anxious to

be up and doing! You know the feeling, I'm sure—when you wake up."

All three of them nodded—little boy and little girl, and great big dog. Didn't they, though?

"But if we are under earth more than three times our cradle's depth, it's almost as bad as though we were in the cruel clay—*almost* as bad, but not quite. You see it takes so long for us to get our heads out when we're so deep down that sometimes we get discouraged, and think we are never going to be able to do it—and so just stop trying."

"Well, I should think you might," said Billy, "I don't blame you."

"So now you know all about it," little Miss Morning-glory smiled another and brighter smile—she was feeling so much better every minute, you know—and then went on, "and I'll tell you something else, too. Right now this very minute I am enjoying the first bit of food I've ever taken, except what was in the cradle with me. And isn't it fine? Yes, sir, it is! I don't know what it is—but I do know I'll soon be big and strong on it. Um—um—yum!"

They looked at her in surprise. Certainly they could not see that she was eating. How in the world did she manage, and where did she find this food? They were pretty nearly bursting with curiosity—but it hardly

seemed polite to ask. She explained, however, without their asking.

"One of my little foragers—roots are foragers to us, you know—has come upon it. He's reaching out, and re-a-ch-ing,—and feeling along and around those particles of earth that Billy thinks are so much like the stones at Rocky Point Beach—wherever and whatever that may be. From the moisture of its smooth sides, this delicious stuff comes. My, isn't it good?"

"I'm so glad," said Betty, "I never can tell you how happy it's made me, and Billy and 'Patkin, too, to have you made so happy and comfortable. I shall never forget this, I tell you."

"And neither shall we," said Billy and 'Patkin.

"Well, I wouldn't if I were you; for surely it is dreadful that helpless seeds such as we were, should ever fall on such earth. They can never waken into anything but wretched captives when they do—frail prisoners of hope!"

Silence fell upon them, the children thinking it all over—all that she had told them—and the little plants resting.

How strange it all was! To think that plants could feel—that it hurt the tender life that was hidden in the dead looking little seed, to be imprisoned in the grip of hard, unkind earth; to know that plants moved

—that even now, everywhere about them just under the ground on which they were sitting, and just under the ground all over the world, thousands and millions and uncountable billions of soft, tender rootlets were reaching and feeling their silent way, moving blindly but surely in search of the moisture that holds the food of plants. Everywhere they are, constantly pushing the earth particles aside, so cautiously as they make their way through that no one has ever seen them move—yet pushing them just the same, with a strong and resistless pressure.

"My goodness!" breathed Betty at last. "Isn't it wonderful?"

"And my goodness," said Mr. Gryllus very gruffly, "it's past the time you were to be in the garden. I'll have to take you over, if you can manage."

"Manage what?" they asked.

"Manage to stick on," he answered shortly, "climb up."

Now of course it is one thing to go about sight-seeing with a kind and whimsical monster; but it is altogether another thing to think of getting on his back and riding there. And, for a moment, Betty felt that she just could not—for though she liked him very much, Gryllus was a most outlandish monster, remember, and one does shrink from really touching any such great creature.

Imagine taking hold of the horn of a cow, if the cow were as large as an elephant, for instance; and climbing on to its back—especially if the horn were eight or ten feet long, and wobbly! And the back covered with shiny black shell! A Gryllus is really much worse to face, too, when one is the size that they were now, than the wildest cow is to us, as we know them.

But there was nothing else to be done; he was waiting, holding out one leg so that they might use its spikes for steps. And so up they went, Betty, then Billy, then 'Patkin.

"You'll have to keep hold of my horn," said Mr. Gryllus, "though, gracious! how I hate to have you! Don't let go, though; you'll tumble off if you do."

"Am I holding too tightly, sir?" asked Billy.

"Oh, no—not too tightly. But it's killing to let you touch 'em at all. Brrr! Makes me wild—simply wild!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Betty.

"Keep still," said he, "don't talk about it! Ready?"

"Yes, Mr. Gryllus—we're ready," said they—and Betty waved good-night to the morning-glories, who nodded and smiled. And then away they went, on the most terrible journey, probably, that two children and a dog ever took in all this world!

Up into the air Mr. Gryllus would leap, not flying,

remember, but jumping with a great bound; and then down he would come, kerplunck! And then what a jounce they would get!

And then up again he would go! And then down he would come again!

At first Betty screamed each time they rose. But at last she hadn't any breath left to scream with, and so could only hang on to one of the great horns and to 'Patkin and Billy, who were hanging on also; and be shaken around like a bundle of rags or something equally limp and helpless.

They got there at last in safety, though; and slid to the ground right beside the great foxglove just as the Princess Dulcinea came out from one of its hoods, her bright wings half furled.

"Oh, if you please, Princess," said Betty, "we would never have been able to get here on time, if dear Mr. Gryllus hadn't carried us!"

"Gryllus? Carried you!" said the princess in astonishment.

"Oh, well," said Mr. Gryllus, "I just happened to be there, and saw how late it was getting. And I hadn't anything special to do, so I offered, if they could stick on. And if you'll believe it, madam, they stuck!" He was wiggling his horns at a terrific rate and Betty felt sure they were hurting him dreadfully.

"He gave us his horns to hang onto," said Billy, "that's how we could."

"Well, well!" said Her Highness, more and more surprised, "you ought to be very grateful indeed to Mr. Gryllus. For *that* was doing a great deal for you!"

Chapter III

HUNGER WALKS AND FAMINE STALKS

FLYING a little to one side and just above them, the Princess Dulcinea led the way along the Avenue of the Hives, with Billy and Betty and 'Patkin following, all close together and holding onto each other, you may be sure. They had a feeling that they wanted to keep very close together all of the time, and run no risk of losing sight of each other for an instant, in this queer world. Mr. Gryllus left them without saying anything—or at least he stayed behind and they left him, so taken up with his horns, which he was still working and wiggling that they did not feel like disturbing him.

"It was very good of Gryllus, of course," said Her Highness, as they went along, "to bring you over. But what a way to travel! And then he is so unreliable; his tribe are a regular vagabond set—good enough in their way of course, but very quarrelsome among themselves, and queer. We must find some other way of getting you about." She looked down at them where they crept along, evidently very much astonished that anything could go so slowly. "Surely," she added, "*surely* you can't be left just to your own powers of locomotion!"

"Lo-co-mo-tion," repeated Billy, "what is that?"

"Locomotion? Why, going ahead, to be sure. Getting yourself somewhere." She looked down at them again and then went on. "I don't wonder that you didn't know, though—you have so few of them. My stars, I should think you would go crazy. Only two legs and they not long; and *no* wings! How on earth do you *ever* get *anywhere?*"

"'Patkin has four," said Betty, rather crestfallen at being so regarded and wishing to make a more favorable impression, "and we have our arms." She waved hers over her head and at the same time took a hop-skip to show how nimble she was. But the Princess did not seem to think much of it; and when Betty watched her beautiful wings beating the air so lightly, and carrying

her along so easily, without her getting the least out of breath no matter how fast she worked them, she felt that she could not blame her. It must be wonderful to have wings, she knew; and everything else, even six legs, was of small consequence compared to them. She decided to change the subject.

"Mr. Gryllus has been lovely to us all the afternoon," she said, "don't you suppose he would stay around all the time, if you asked him to?"

"Perhaps," said Her Highness, then gave a little sniff, "and then again, perhaps not. You can't tell. I'd much rather have one of my kinsfolk—some one really dependable, you know."

"Oh, yes, Your Highness," said Betty, quite awed by this calm assertion of merit. At the same time she felt very sorry at being deprived of Mr. Gryllus' cheerful company—and she wondered just what sort of person would be called upon to take his place. Her thoughts were broken in upon, however, by a sweet, low sound that the princess was making; and she looked up at her, fascinated by it.

"Try it," said Her Highness, circling around to keep from leaving them behind, "I want you to learn it."

Obediently Betty tried it; and then Billy and then 'Patkin. But neither of them came near it—except 'Patkin, and he was not very near. "Try it again, after

me," said Dulcinea, and repeated it. And they tried it again; and again, and again, until at last they began to make a sound that resembled it.

"It's the clan call," explained the Princess, "and you must practice it until you can do it without any trouble—for if you find yourselves in danger or lost or anything like that, you have only to sound it to bring every clanswoman around for a great distance, to your aid. Do it again!"

Really it was wonderful the way she taught it to them, when you think that she had a mouth quite different from theirs—or that they had mouths quite different from *hers*—and that their voices were stored in quite a different voice-box. But of course she had no end of patience and perseverance, and such a way with her that they thought they were learning it quite easily. And when at last she led them into the midst of a lovely bower of some kind of growth they had not seen before, and settled down on a great blossom that nodded at one side, they could give a very good imitation of it.

"I must go now," she said, after she had heard them several times over—and corrected 'Patkin, who had trouble not to sound the call too deep in his throat as he sounded his own growl—"you will be safe here for the night. There is still an hour of light, but I cannot take the time to visit you again, so I must ask you to

stay here, and not leave until I come, with the morning."

"Do you bring the morning?" asked Billy.

"Oh, no! I come with it, though—at the same time, I mean."

Betty was looking around a little anxiously. "If you please, Your Highness," said she, "can you tell me where I will find our tea?"

"Your what?"

"Our tea—our supper, you know. I—I didn't see any table set, but I'll set it. I can do everything like that, for I always did for mother. I can get supper, too, if you'll tell me where the cupboard is."

"My goodness!" said the Princess, staring at her, "what are you talking about, child?"

Betty stared back at her, quite forgetting that she was a princess for the moment, in her wonder at not being understood. Then she said hastily, lest she had been rude, "I beg your pardon—but Billy always has something to eat early—"

"Oh—ho!" interrupted Dulcinea, "something to *eat!* Why didn't you say so? All this talk about a table! What's that got to do with it? Why do you beat around the bush so? Here's something to eat—and here, and here! All around there's any amount of delicious food. Just help yourselves."

She had flown with a little buzz from one clover head

to another and another as she spoke, pointing down into them. Then she suddenly stopped and looked puzzled. "But to be sure," said she, "how are you going to get up to them? No wings!—only two legs!—can't walk except right side up! Bless me! How's it to be managed?"

She thought a moment, then made a little sound something like the call she had just taught them; and right away Dulciana appeared, with two or three others, and alighted on clover heads. She explained the difficulty; and Her Highness Dulciana laughed a little.

"Why, that is very easy," said she, "come, all gather here beside me and I'll show you."

They did; and of course their weight toppled the clover blossom away down so far that it touched the ground. "Now come and help yourselves," she told the children, "while we hold it. Every urn is half full—probably you call them flowerets. Stick your heads in as far as you can; or get at it somehow. You'll have to find a way."

They had a dreadful time! For of course the nectar was carefully hidden and would not run out just because the flowerets were upside down; and they could not get their heads into them, naturally. But at last Betty thrust her arm into the depths of one and gave a determined push,—and that tore away the little cover that

held it back—and she was deluged with the sweet fluid as it poured forth.

"Well," said Dulcinea. "I guess you've found it now! You'll have to go about it a little more carefully."

Which she did; and at last they succeeded in opening as many of the flowerets as they wanted to, and drinking as much nectar as they could possibly hold. And then the two princesses and the ladies-in-waiting unfurled their wings and started to sail away, with pleasant "Good nights," and "See you when morning comes," and so on. But Betty spoke up again.

"Oh, just a moment, Your Highnesses," she cried, "but—if you please, where are we going to sleep? Where are our beds—or our cribs? And what are we to do for blankets?"

"*Now* what is she talking about?" asked Princess Dulcinea, almost out of patience, "can't these poor creatures even go to rest without being shown how? Really, this is too much!"

"Your Highness," broke in 'Patkin with great dignity, "permit me to explain that these my friends and charges are children—*not* full grown members of the human tribe. And it is the custom among that tribe to tend their young very carefully, even as you tend yours, and to watch over them and provide them with everything until they are quite full fledged. Which seems to

me a matter for praise rather than for criticism—or for merriment," and he cast a very stern look around on the ladies-in-waiting, who had been giggling among themselves.

Neither Betty nor Billy would have dared to speak so to her, a princess of the royal house of Apis; but 'Patkin explained to them later that, as a matter of fact, every member of her tribe was always descended from a queen, if not from the reigning queen—and what was more, he did not propose to have her nor any one else making merry at their expense, or criticizing them, royalty or no royalty!

The rebuke was effective; and every one tried to look as if she had not criticized or giggled, whatever her companions had done. And the Princess Dulcinea said very seriously, "What are we going to do? Our guests must have a place of rest provided for them—"

"Just as you have your hives," said 'Patkin, "provided by their tribe, for yours."

"Exactly! To be sure! Just as we have our hives. The question is, where can we house them? Where will they rest, safe and secure, as all things should be at night time?"

This started a great hubbub; from which any one could see with half an eye that here was a question that had never come before the people of the Apis kingdom

before. Others of the clan gathered; and every one tried to talk at the same time; and really, pandemonium reigned, as they say in the newspapers of conventions and political meetings.

The three looked on and waited; and presently they heard one voice above all the rest, saying over and over again, "Over beyond Columbine, over beyond Columbine—!" And the speaker said it so continually that finally others began to hear her; and gradually the commotion grew less, and one after another turned towards her.

"Over beyond Columbine—over beyond Columbine—there is a *cavern!*" she shouted at last. "I know it, I saw it when I visited her. Over beyond Colum—"

"Over beyond yonder scarlet-hooded Columbine?" asked Dulciana, sharply.

"Yes, Your Highness—beyond yonder scarlet-hooded Columbine. And it is a dry and lofty cavern where I know our friends will find safe shelter. Indeed, it's not unlike the dwellings of the Hive Providers, one of which —as you all know—I entered once, by mistake to be sure, nevertheless I went in; and from end to end of the great cells or chambers there I wandered, too, before ever I got out. But at last I did get out, thank fortune! And so I speak with some authority I think, on how they live."

Billy's eyes danced—and so, too, did Betty's. To live in a cave!—was that not what they had always secretly wanted? "Is it a really, truly cavern—a cave in a rock?" asked he, when he could get the question in.

"Yes, indeed," answered the lady-in-waiting, "right in the rock."

"Conduct them thither, Lady Aea, then—if you please," commanded Dulcinea, "and thank our stars, all of us, *that's* settled. Good night, friends."

It was indeed a lovely cavern, big and high and dry. What is more, it had a splendid, prickery chestnut burr lying open and empty right in the middle of it—the very thing for a bed, as Betty at once exclaimed. "You can have one half and I the other," said she, climbing up the side by means of the spines that covered it, to look in, "and 'Patkin can go on both sides, and be with both of us—one, part of the time, and the other, part of the time. Oh, it's just bee—yu—ti—ful!" She came back down again, and looked around; and the Lady Aea, who was waiting politely to see that everything was all to their liking, saw that she wanted something. "What is it?" she asked.

"Mattresses—and covers," said Betty; "what am I to do for those?"

"Oh—of course. I ought to have known that," Aea was quite disgusted with herself, "there's the very thing

right here—not a wing-flap away—any amount of dandelion down."

She stayed by Billy and 'Patkin while Betty went over to the place which she pointed out to her, and brought armful after armful, and packed it down into the chestnut burr. And then she too went away, after everything was fixed for the night, and Betty had brought for blankets and sheets some deep pink petals, just like silk, that blew down in front of her from a poppy flower as she was making her last trip.

And into bed they climbed, tumbling over onto the soft down with delight, and making regular little nests in it, with 'Patkin jumping from one to the other in the wildest kind of a romp.

They had just settled down to go to sleep, when they heard Mr. Gryllus calling to them. Betty stuck her head up over the side of the crib, and answered, "Halloo! Here we are, Mr. Gryllus—up here, gone to bed in this big burr."

"Well," said he as he sidled into the cavern and looked around, "this is something like. I was uneasy about you —for the Chlænius are out—and they'd make short work of all three of you."

"Mercy! Who are the Chlænius?" they cried.

"Oh, they're a wild set of hunters that track their game all night, after honest folks are abed—good

friends of your tribe, in their way, but bad people for you to meet while you're this size. For they don't care who they kill; they're an awfully reckless crew!"

"Oh, dear! Won't they find us anyway?" cried Billy.

"No, they won't bother if you're not running about. You just stay up there where you are and go to sleep—and don't think anything more about them. Or if you think about them, just remember that they are on guard before your cavern door, and that nothing *else* can come and harm you, with them there."

"Are you sure?" asked 'Patkin, "don't you think I ought to sit up?"

"Of course I'm sure," snapped Mr. Gryllus, "didn't I tell you they only hunt after *honest* folks are abed? And aren't you abed? Well—then stay there!"

"But what about yourself?" asked 'Patkin, a trifle offended.

"Well, I'll 'tend to myself. I'm bigger than they; don't you worry."

Which was the last word out of him for that night; and before very long they were fast asleep, though 'Patkin did keep one eye half open, all the night through. He was used to that, however, and so did not mind.

A Sunbeam found them out in the morning, and came right in and peeped into their eyes, very mischievously. And they were up in a hurry, you may be sure, clamber-

ing out of their funny bed to bathe in the pools of dew that Columbine very kindly shook down for them, just outside the cave. And then off they started to the bower where they had supped—so hungry—oh, *so* hungry!

"I wish I could have some oatmeal," said Billy, as they went along, "I do declare, it feels as if something was just gnawing in me, like 'Patkin gnaws on his bones. Do you s'pose we could find some oatmeal?"

Betty looked very serious—and felt very serious, for she was hungry, too, and troubled because she was pretty sure they would not be able to find any. "I don't know," said she slowly, "but if we can't, we will find something else, I'm sure, Billy dear. It's prob'ly too early for princesses to be up yet, so—"

"Too early," gasped the Lady Aea's voice from just beside them, "well, don't let them hear you saying anything like that, my dears. Too *early!* Why they've been out for hours—*hours!*"

They looked around quickly, and there she was, poised on a clover blossom again. "I've been waiting for you," she went on, "ever and ever so long. For you see we remembered," here she gave 'Patkin a significant look, "that you must be served with food again, with the coming of morning."

"Oh, dear Lady Aea! Aren't you good to us," cried Betty, "and we are so hungry!"

"Well, come along then," said she, and flew ahead until they reached the clover bower. And there she called some of her sisters to help her; and once more the children and 'Patkin drank deep of the clover nectar, while the flowers were held down for them. They drank a great deal more, too, than they had taken the night before—yet somehow, they did not feel satisfied.

"I wish we could have some oatmeal," said Billy again, looking into the floweret from which he had been drinking, with a little frown on his face, "this is awfully sweet, isn't it?"

"S-sh," warned Betty, "don't say anything to hurt anybody's feelings, Billy. You know it isn't polite to find fault with what you have to eat when you're visiting—nor to ask for anything that isn't given to you. Probably they haven't any oatmeal."

'Patkin listened attentively, and said nothing for a few moments; but at his fourth drink of nectar he took a long breath and almost shivered. "I can't help it," said he in answer to Betty's warning look, "I can't drink another bit. This is no kind of food for a dog!"

She was much relieved to see that no one had heard him except herself and Billy. The Lady Aea and the others were busy with still another clover head, bringing it down where they might drink from its flowerets—but they could not drink another bit, as a matter of fact!

She tried to think of a nice way of telling them so.

"I guess we won't have any more now, thank you," said she, "it's—it's rather early yet, for us to drink a great deal. Perhaps—"

"Oh, then you don't eat as soon as you get up?" said her ladyship in surprise.

"Well, yes—we do. But we've had enough now, thank you."

"Very well, then," she dismissed those who were helping at the flower head, with a wave of a wing, "when will you wish something more, may I ask? I will come back whenever you say."

More of that sweet drink! Ugh!—would they *ever* want any more of it? Betty was afraid they would not. "I don't quite know," she answered, "couldn't I call you? Mightn't we make the call?"

"Why certainly," she began to unfurl her wings and set them to going, slowly, "whenever you're ready. So I'll be off to my work, if you'll excuse me."

They decided to go for a walk, not feeling very lively after such a breakfast; and with Billy between his sister and 'Patkin, as they usually walked, they set off, in the direction of the sun. They had not gone very far—perhaps six or seven feet, really, though it seemed to them at least a block or more—before an angry voice said, somewhere high up in the air, "Well, *I* say that if

we went on hunger strike perhaps a little attention would be paid to our bills of fare—and we might get somewhere near what we want!"

It was a very cross voice indeed; and they stopped stock still and looked everywhere, trying to make out who had spoken. But a dead silence followed the speech—one of those very still times when everybody can hear his own heart beat, and is wondering what on earth is going to happen *next.* This proposal was a surprise and a shock to every one who had heard it, no doubt.

After a moment though there came a very high, silvery, well-bred voice that instantly made them know its owner was a gentlewoman—and made them feel that the other speaker was not—which said, "But a great deal of attention *is* paid to our bills of fare. I am sure we cannot fail to know that. And those charged with our care are not indifferent, by any means; on the contrary they are most anxious. So of course none of us would willingly—nor wilfully—do anything to increase their anxiety—nor wish to do anything unkind, or annoying."

There came a little sigh at the end of the speech; and suddenly Billy spied the one who had made it, all her dainty pink frills a-quiver, so lovely and delicate and fragile up there above them that he could hardly believe

she was real—a sweet pea blossom, nodding on her long stem.

"Oh, see!— Look, sister!— Look, 'Patkin!— That's who it is," he whispered, pointing, "isn't she beautiful? Don't you just love her?"

"Isn't she," echoed Betty, "and indeed I do!"

Which was the truth; for no one ever yet looked at the lovely Countess Spencer—that's who she was—without falling head over ears in love with her, instantly.

A heavier voice broke in here. "You needn't talk," it said gruffly, "*you* needn't talk, Miss Salvia! Why, you can eat anything and thrive on it, and you know you can. Sweet, sour or savory, it's all the same to you. That's one reason why you're so blamed popular!"

It was the Admiral who said this—a cousin of the Countess, and a ruddy faced old dog of a sweet pea, as one expects an Admiral to be; and he was glaring across at Miss Salvia who stood on the other side of the path.

As for her, she was scarlet! And it did seem as if she began to realize that her attitude was in extremely bad taste. But of course she would not acknowledge it—which is about what might be expected!

The Countess went on after a moment. "They will find out very soon now, I am sure—if we just go on and do as well as we can, and make the best of what we do

get. Of course they are blundering terribly; but if they keep on trying, they are bound to strike it soon—for they will have been all the way through the list!" She even laughed softly, a silvery little laugh. But plainly it was no laughing matter.

"Dear me," whispered Betty, "if *they* aren't talking about eating, too. Isn't it queer?"

Softly as she spoke, the Countess heard her; and looked right down from her lofty place, and smiled. "Does it seem so, my dear?" she asked, "why is that?"

Betty blushed at finding herself so suddenly spoken to, and at having been overheard when she made a personal remark. But she answered freely just the same —for the Countess was so lovely that no one could be afraid of her, nor even embarrassed where she was, more than a jiffy. She had the way with her that makes one feel at home, right away.

"Why, if you please, Countess," said Betty, "I don't exactly know why it seems queer—only that it does. Of course Miss Morning-glory told us yesterday something about eating—and we've heard Alec talk about feeding them—you—I mean, the things in the garden. But I guess we never really believed it before; we thought he was just talking, the way he always does, you know."

The Countess nodded until her frilly cap fluttered

about her face again. "Yes," said she, "I can understand. But Alec is a good gardener, you see—so after all, it isn't all 'just talking.' Oh, dear! I wish we had an Alec, or old Simon back, to tend us—he was a good gardener, too. The new one can't seem to find the food we are longing for, oh!—*so* much!"

"Didn't you have any breakfast either?" asked Billy, sympathetically.

"We didn't," put in 'Patkin, by way of explanation.

"Breakfast? What is that?"

"Breakfast in the morning—what you eat first."

"Oh—do you eat first?"

"We eat breakfast, and dinner, and tea—or supper," explained Betty, "three meals a day."

"Oh," said the Countess, "that's it, eh? Now I understand. You see, we don't do just that way. We eat all of the time."

"All of the time?" Here was something stranger still!

"Yes, indeed. But we eat very slowly. Perhaps it takes us all the time on that account."

That seemed a very good explanation. "Then I s'pose you are eating your breakfast now," suggested 'Patkin.

"Well, we are eating now, of course—after a fashion. But oh, my dears! We are so overfed with what we

have, and we want what we want—which is what we don't get—so badly, that I assure you it is sickening to have to eat at all!"

"Indeed it is," put in the Admiral, "and that's what we were talking about when you came along."

"Why, that's just like us, this morning," exclaimed Betty, "we *couldn't* drink any more nectar—and we wanted oatmeal, or egg or something like that—or bread and butter. But there wasn't a thing but nectar!"

"Ugh!" shivered 'Patkin at the word.

"You poor children," said the Countess, "we know how to pity you."

"Indeed we do!" said the Admiral.

"And *we* know how to pity *you,*" said Betty. Then a thought struck her. "Oh, Countess," she cried, "perhaps we can help you. 'Patkin knows the new gardener—and when we get home, he could tell him what you want and ask him please to get it for you. This, you know," she waved her hand around, "is 'Patkin's Lady's garden."

"Bless my soul," exclaimed the Admiral, leaning way over to look at them sharply, "what are the sprites talking about?"

"Oh, we aren't sprites," said Betty hastily, "we're real people—children, you know, that grow up to be men and women."

"Tut, tut," said he, looking displeased, "no nonsense, my dears—no nonsense. I've seen many a child in my day, and I know what children look like."

"But we *are,*" she insisted, "and we aren't always little like this. I don't mean to tell the gardener now —but when we get back."

"Back where?" asked the Admiral, severely.

"Back home, sir."

"How do you go there?"

"Well, we—why, I don't know exactly, sir. But I think we'll be going pretty soon—and then we'll tell him, or 'Patkin will."

He looked very suspicious, but he said no more, for the Countess gave him a glance and spoke up herself. "Do you suppose it would do any good?" she asked. "Do you really suppose it would?"

"Oh, yes," cried all three very earnestly, "we're sure it might. Do let us try, anyway."

"I believe I will," said she wearily, "for really it is almost killing us. Indeed, I am afraid it will kill some of us—for some are never as strong as others, you know, and get so discouraged! But do you suppose you can remember, if I tell you?"

"Try us," said they with one voice, "we'll *try!*"

"Good!" said she, nodding again. "That's the way! Now, just you listen, then say after me—'Three things

a plant must have to eat, As folks must have bread, cake and meat.' "

They said it over. "Once more," said she. And they said it again, all together. Then she stopped to explain a little.

"Let us suppose," she said, "let us suppose that you had to have just one of the things which you eat, for all the meals that you have said you eat every day—for breakfast and dinner and supper. Suppose you had to live on cake—rich chocolate cake for breakfast, and rich fig cake for dinner, and then some marshmallow cake or sponge cake for supper—with sweet cocoa to drink perhaps and nothing else—"

"Ugh!" said Billy, shivering as 'Patkin had done a moment before.

"Or suppose you had nothing but sour things,"—put in the Admiral—"lemons and rhubarb and vinegar. How would you like *that,* do you suppose?"

"It would be awful," cried Betty.

"Yet that is all we have had, for weeks!" said the Countess.

"What!—Nothing but rhubarb and lemons and vinegar?" gasped Billy, horrified.

"What amounts to the same thing," said the Admiral in his deep gruff voice, "call 'em alum and quinine and asafetida, if you'd rather—anything your fancy

may suggest. The name doesn't mean very much, as I know of. Too much of any one thing is bound to be famine."

"How terrible," said Betty, "whatever can they be thinking of to give you such dreadful stuff!"

"They don't know any better," said the Countess, "they think food is food, no matter what kind it is—just as the princesses think with you—as if we had no tastes or choice! They come and look at us and say, 'I can't understand it. These sweet peas have had *quantities* of fertilizer—and yet see how few blossoms there are.' And they look so worried! That's why I am not in favor of doing anything radical about it. They want to do what is right—and they talk and wonder; so we know their hearts are in the right place."

"I'm sure they do want to," said Betty, "I know how anxious Alec always is to give everything just what it wants."

"Well, now we'll begin again—and go a little further. You'll find some words you may not have heard before. Be careful about them—and whatever you do, *don't* mix them up! Ready?—we call it 'A Bill of Fare.' "

A BILL OF FARE

" 'Three things a plant must have to eat
As folks have bread and cake and meat;
Also, they like a dash of Lime,

For flavoring from time to time.

Nitrogen's the special ration,
For that class of vegetation
You eat the tops of—and its source
Is bedding from stable of cow or horse.

Plants grown for flowers need much Phosphate,
Or you in vain for flowers will wait;
This comes in bone-meal—awful smelling!—
Not nice to have around a dwelling.

'All kinds of fruit require Potash;—
This is in wood when burned to ash—
So hardwood ashes all fruits delight:
How strangely things differ in appetite!'"

"Well—I should say they did," broke in Betty at the last line.

"Wait," said the Countess, "that's not all; and this last is very important. It has to do with just our case, you see; we've had too much of the two that we *don't* need, and hardly a bit of the one that we do. See if you can tell which it is we are suffering for. Notice carefully, now:

'One part Nitrogen, Phosphate two,
Three parts Potash—that's the menu,—
This proportion of each ingredient
In the diet of plants is most expedient:

Unless you choose, at special seasons,
Or because they're raised for special reasons,
Leaf, flower, or fruit to stimulate,

So that one or another grows specially great.

Each will rob other, though, you'll always find,
Rank growth of leaves, leaves flowers behind—
Where flowers amaze folks, they're so many,
Fruit's mostly poor, or there's not any!' "

"There's quite a good deal of it, isn't there?" said Billy, sighing.

"Not a word too much," cried 'Patkin, "there never can be too much about eating! And I'm going to put the proper foods for a dog into poetry, when I've studied it a little more."

"Well, I wish our proper foods were written down, or that we could tell their Highnesses Dulcinea and Dulciana about them, some way," said Betty as she looked up at the sun and saw that it was growing near noon. "What do you suppose we will have to eat for our dinner?"

"Poor little folks," said the Countess, shaking her head, "and poor doggie! I wish we could help you."

"And we wish *we* could help *you,*" they cried as they started back along the path.

"Well, just that helps some," called the Admiral's gruff voice after them.

Chapter IV

OUTLAWS AND OVERLORDS

THEY had gone only a little way when they caught sight of something coming in the distance—dashing headlong toward them in the wildest fashion; and as 'Patkin paused, Betty and Billy did also, naturally enough. They watched it a moment; and then Billy opened his mouth to say "What can be the matter, do you suppose?" but just at that instant it turned suddenly and came full tilt in their direction—and came so fast that it bumped squarely into Betty and almost knocked her over.

'Patkin sprang toward it with a fierce growl. "What do you mean?" demanded he. "Where are your manners, I'd like to know. Why didn't you go on the way you were going, you lunatic—then you wouldn't have run into her. Of all the clumsy, inexcusable—"

"Oh!" screamed Betty as the creature reared itself

and held up a pair of awful looking things like pincers, reaching at 'Patkin with them. "Oh, 'Patkin! Never mind. I'm not hurt a bit; and this—this—person is in such a hurry; probably he—it—didn't see me." She edged over in front of him—or tried to—and turned to it with a curtsey. "It's nothing," said she pleasantly, though her heart beat wildly, for the thing was quite as large as 'Patkin and evidently very short tempered, "it's really nothing. And please don't mind what 'Patkin said. He was excited because he was 'fraid I was hurt, I guess."

"Don't—don't stop me," came the impatient answer, "of course I'm in a hurry. I'm always in a hurry—and just *now!*— If I weren't I'd—oh, I'd—." It dashed at 'Patkin again with the ugly looking pincers outstretched and opening and shutting fiercely. "Well, I'd—."

"You'd what?" demanded 'Patkin, bristling and glaring, "just *what,* now, I'd like to know? Tell me!"

"'Patkin," cried Betty, "leave it alone! Don't get into any arguments with *anything.* Never mind any more about it—and come on."

"Oh, I've no time for fighting—or fooling. And you're no account anyway—alive. And not much account—dead." This with something between a sneer

and a jeer as it ran about back and forth, in nervous haste.

This was not a very pleasant thing to say, whatever it meant; and Betty wished it would go on if it was in such a rush. "Don't let us detain you any longer," said she, beginning to move off in the direction they had been going, tugging at Billy who in turn tugged at 'Patkin—who was still very much enraged, but nevertheless allowed himself to be pulled along slowly, "good afternoon."

"Well, I've good reason to be in a hurry—and nervous," said the stranger, "I have a great deal to attend to; and I don't see why any one should get in my way."

"Well, it's not very reasonable to expect everything to move, and always get *out* of the way to give you a free track," said Mr. Gryllus' voice, as he jumped into sight from his hiding place under a clump of greenery.

"Who cares about being reasonable?" snapped the thing, "all I want is to get there."

"Well, nobody's hindering you now," said Mr. Gryllus —and winked at the children.

"Ah—gh!" gurgled the creature, and raised up at him and snapped the pincers in a rage, "ah—gh!" And then it turned and ran.

"I don't know what ails 'em," said Mr. Gryllus as they watched it racing out of sight, "but they always are like

that—and they always run like all get out! Something's the matter with their nerves, I guess."

"Well, who is it, I'd like to know?" asked 'Patkin with a good deal of disgust in his tone.

"That happens to be Skurry, of the Formicas. You remember you saw one yesterday, dashing through the grass where I first saw you. And as you are likely to meet them anywhere, and any time, I must warn you to be on the lookout—and always to get out of the way if they are coming toward you, for they never bother to turn out."

"Well, this one wasn't coming toward us, at first. But it turned when it got most past, and ran right at us," said Billy.

Mr. Gryllus waved a horn. "Exactly!" said he. "That's just what they are apt to do. You never can tell."

"Then I don't see how you can keep out of their way," said Betty, beginning to laugh, "anything as crazy as that!"

"Well, you can't be sure you're going to," answered Mr. Gryllus, laughing too, "just try. That's all. And if they run into you, don't stop to argue. You never can tell when there may be a lot of 'em around—and if they get after you, you'd be in a bad way."

"Could they hurt us?" asked Billy.

"My gracious! They'd kill you in no time—and then eat you up," answered Mr. Gryllus, "they're a bad lot when they get on the warpath. Why, it's nothing for them to fight their heads right off of their bodies!"

"Oh!" gasped Betty. "That's what I've seen ants do. Oh—I'll bet they *are* ants! Aren't they?"

"Don't ask me what your tribe calls them," answered Mr. Gryllus, "like enough it's ants—though I shouldn't suppose they were any relation."

"Dear me," she explained hastily, "it's not *that* kind of ant. And they aren't any relation. I've heard Mrs. Bell at the Orphanage, though, call 'em a nuisance."

"Well, that's what I call 'em," said Mr. Gryllus, decidedly.

Along came another just at that instant, running at top speed, and not quite sure of the direction it would follow—and so running a little way to the right and then a little to the left. And before it was out of sight, two more—and then one and another and then a company of several—appeared and hurried past. "Something's up, I guess," said Mr. Gryllus, "they're more excited than usual."

He was right; for very soon there appeared a whole procession, running pell mell and each carrying a white bundle. Right in front of Betty though, one laid hers down—and began washing her face with her paws, lick-

ing them just like a cat. After watching her a moment, Betty could stand it no longer, but spoke to her.

"It's a very nice day," said she, for want of anything else to begin a conversation, "have you been shopping?"

"Oh, that's the trouble—these nice days," was the answer in a worried and hurried voice, "they come out and fuss around and upset everything—and make us such an amount of work! We've got to get these children moved and the new nurseries aren't ready—and oh, dear! It's just awful!"

That was not exactly answering her question, but Betty tried again. "Children," said she, "where are they? I'd like to see them."

"Well, here's one. And there go the others." She kept on with the touches to her toilet, and Betty looked all around. 'Patkin went toward the bundle, thinking perhaps that he detected an odor of meat. "Here, you!" she shrieked so unexpectedly that they all jumped—and then she dashed at him just as Skurry had done, brandishing a similar pair of pincers, "keep away from that. How dare you?"

"I beg your pardon," said 'Patkin; "I meant no harm, I assure you."

"Well, you keep away anyway," was the cross answer; and she picked the bundle up and moved it over a little—then went back to her slicking and grooming,

"it may be only one child out of a thousand or several —but every one counts. You let it alone."

"Child!" gasped Betty, too astonished not to.

"Child?— Why, yes, to be sure. What's the matter with *you?*"

Betty looked at Billy and Billy at Betty—and they both looked at 'Patkin and he at them. Then he sniffed towards the white bundle again, without going near it however; and nodded his head.

"Oh—h—nothing," said Betty, in a breathless, halting way, "nothing's the matter."

"Well, you're fortunate! Plenty is the matter with us! I never remember, in any of our tribal legends, hearing of a colony *so* bothered as we are, and have been! I don't know how many times we've had to move—and now they are at it again."

"At what?" asked 'Patkin, trying to speak affably, though he disliked her intensely.

"At tormenting us!" she snapped, "destroying our flocks, and teasing and tormenting the earth and ruining our abode. Ugh! The wretched, useless creatures!"

"Who is doing this," asked Betty, very much interested.

"Who? Why, who does everything like that? Who but the tribe of MEN to be sure—great clumsy Over-

lords! Why in the world they can't let us alone, to pursue our ways in peace, is beyond me! But they can't—or they don't, which amounts to the same thing. They're forever rummaging around, and interfering with things."

She picked up her bundle and hurried away after saying this, with never another look at them, nor a word of farewell. "Well," said Betty, looking after her, "she's not very polite." At which Mr. Gryllus laughed long and loudly.

For a long time the procession of hurrying Formicas kept passing; but at last the very last one was past and running on out of sight—and the children decided they would like to go and see the place they came from, and what manner of catastrophe it was had upset them so. So they started off, Gryllus warning them to keep to the deepest shadows and heaviest growth.

They went quite a distance before they heard the thundering noise which they knew meant the footsteps of a man somewhere near. Then they went more and more carefully, creeping from shelter to shelter and watching, and stopping to listen every step or two; and presently, as they paused near a delicious spice Pink, something fell onto the path right in front of them.

"Oh, my roots and branches!" they heard, in an angry, bitter voice, "what wouldn't I give to be revenged on

you, you masterful being you! And on you, all you pretty-faced, smiling, smirking plants! You've no more right here than I have! A-ha! Won't I get even with you for this—all of you? I'll show you—or if I don't, some of my fellows will. *You'll* be sorry!"

"Indeed they will," said other biting and angry tones, "we'll be even, never fear, my good pal. They may oust us; but our kindred are many. And always they must work and work and work, and watch and sweat, if they are to keep ahead of old Plantain and old Ragweed—eh? The over-bearing creatures! How I despise them all! Overlords and mincing, weakly plants they cultivate."

"Why, I do believe it's that old Plantain talking to that horrid Ragweed," said Billy, as they watched from their place of concealment. The two weeds lay prone in the dust of the walk, uprooted but a moment before, it would seem. And they were certainly in a fine rage at everything around—for they had hidden themselves so cunningly beneath the leaves of the flowering plants in the border that they had not an idea any one would ever succeed in finding them.

There was commotion on every side, as a matter of fact—arguing and scolding and reviling that made the summery morning quite hideous with the sound of it. "My goodness," said Betty, "I should think you'd be

ashamed of yourselves! Why, you jostle and crowd and act worse than anything I ever saw—even the pigs, when Alec feeds them."

Cries of "Mind your business!" "Who are you?" "I *will* get up there!" "Leave me alone—get out of my way, will you?" "It's my turn first! It's mine to have the first chance! I—I!—" "'Tis not! I *won't* move over!" "Stop pushing me, you great big—" and so on rose on every side, and they listened in astonishment until they were very much disgusted indeed. "Who'd ever have believed it," said Betty; "if they hadn't heard it with their own ears? Whatever is going to become of such acting plants?"

No one answered or pretended to try to answer; but just then the Princess Dulcinea came singing into sight away up above, and they forgot the quarreling flowers in looking up at her. For she was accompanied by the most wonderful being they had yet seen—a monstrous creature on wings like herself, but very different from her, and many, many times larger.

Wonder and admiration and awe filled them as they beheld the splendor of the great wings reaching away out on either side, and the brightness of the eyes that looked every way at once. And Mr. Gryllus, who was not far distant, exclaimed aloud, "The very fellow! That's a *fine* idea!"

Down came the princess and this beautiful stranger until they were so close that she could introduce him. Then she spoke. "Children," said she, "this is Libellula —king of all kings in our kingdoms, hunter of hunters, destroyer of destroyers, whose speed is like the lightning's bolt, whose wings are tireless as the sun, whose eyes look up and down and back and to the front— and on every side as well. He will take care of you and guard you better than even we are able; and he will bear you on his back wherever you may wish to travel. And I think Mr. Gryllus,"—here she smiled sweetly at him—or seemed to smile—"will agree that it is a much more suitable mode of travel for you, than he, or any one else, can offer."

"It is indeed," answered Gryllus, looking up in his funny way, one horn wiggling nervously at the bare recollection of what he endured when they had clung to it so tightly, "it is indeed, the very ideal arrangement for them. And I congratulate you on bringing it about, Your Highness."

This was of course a very nice compliment to Libellula as well as to her Serene Highness Dulcinea; and both behaved in the lofty manner which it is correct for royalty to assume upon being complimented.

Then Betty stepped forward. "How do you do, King Libellula," said she, bobbing her nicest curtsey very care-

fully, "we are most happy to meet you." And, "How do you do, King Libellula," said Billy, following her and doing exactly as she had done, just as nearly as he was able—except that being a boy, of course he put his hand over his heart and bowed, "we are very pleased to have the pleasure of knowing you." And then came 'Patkin, waving his great plume of a tail as he took his turn. "How do you do, King Libellula," said he, "we are highly honored by your graciousness."

The great creature came down slowly at that, settling onto the earth beside them as gently as a snowflake; but Dulcinea kept on the wing, only waiting for these formalities to be over, apparently, to speed away to her duties once more.

"Very nice little people," said the King in a hearty, rollicking kind of a voice, "*very* nice, indeed—every one. It's going to be a pleasure to look after you, my dears, I am sure; a pleasure and a privilege. Didn't you find it so, Gryllus?"

"Yes, I must say that I did," said Mr. Gryllus, "but that's only natural, Sire—for mine and their's have dwelt together for ages. With you, however—"

"Tut, tut," said Libellula, "I and mine may be too wild to have kept them company as intimately as you; but I'm a democratic person, I am. And what's more, I'm a mixer; so I'm mighty glad of this chance. Every-

body ought to know everybody better. That's what I say."

The Princess started away. "Good-by, each," said she, "I'll expect you for supper, children; but until then I must attend to my work."

"Now, where do you want to go?" asked Libellula, after they had waved her out of sight, "get aboard—and wherever it is, we'll set sail."

"Oh, if you please, your Majesty," began Betty, but he interrupted her.

"Just you call me by my name, without any handles," said he, "I don't want to be 'majestied' all the time, from morning until night."

"Yes, sir," said she, and began over again. "If you please, sir—King Libel—I mean, Libellula—could we see this garden we are in? I never heard plants quarreling so or knew that they quarreled so, anywhere, in all my life. And I'd like to go all around and see what is the matter of 'em."

"Surely we can," said he heartily, "come on. Get aboard."

He tilted one great wing down to the ground as he stood there, so they might walk up its shining surface like walking up the gangplank on to a boat. "Take your time, and get fixed all comfy," he went on, "you needn't

be afraid of falling off, though. For, though I go pretty swiftly, I go smoothly, too."

They really felt quite safe, once they got up onto his broad back and were seated and could look about. For his wings came away out on either side, and between them it was nicely flattened, right where they wanted to sit; and his coat was not at all shiny like Mr. Gryllus' shell armor, but nicely furry, so they would not slip around.

He waited until they got everything fixed just as they wanted to be. Then he said, "Ready?" And they answered as they had answered Mr. Gryllus, "Ready!"—pretty breathlessly, you may be sure, though they tried to hide this. And then he rose.

They waved at Mr. Gryllus, who waved back a horn at them and called that he would see them later; and then they just gasped as they went higher and higher.

"Oh," said Billy, "that's the Orphanage, isn't it, sister—that's the Orphanage, way over there."

"Yes," said Betty, "that's what it is. And here's the white house where 'Patkin lives—isn't it, 'Pat?"

"Yes, yes," said 'Patkin, trembling with excitement and delight, "and now we're over the vegetable garden—and now the lawn—and now the rose garden—and oh!—oh!—there's my precious Lady! It is, it *is*—!"

"Sit still," exclaimed Libellula, slowing down a bit

and looking very stern out of his great eyes that saw backward where they were sitting as well as forward in the way he was going, "sit *still!* Are you out of your wits, to begin jumping around so? Do you want to take a tumble yourself and give your young friends one as well? I'm amazed at you!"

As a matter of fact, 'Patkin had gone quite out of his mind with delight, and jumped and wagged his tail wildly; and nothing in the world but good luck prevented his capsizing himself and Billy and Betty, all three, off on to the ground—good luck, and Libellula's skilful management. He changed his course quickly enough to keep the dog balanced—but it was ticklish work. And 'Patkin realized what risks he had brought upon them by his carelessness, as soon as the first joy at seeing his beloved mistress was over.

"Oh, dear little Betty," said he, when he saw that she was crying—and that was what really brought him to himself—putting his head on her shoulder and looking at her very sorrowfully, "please forgive me. I didn't think about anything but my dear Lady for a minute! But I ought not to have forgotten; and I wouldn't do anything in the world to hurt you or Billy—for next to her, I love you. But when a dog sees his mistress, you know how hard it is for him to contain himself! Especially when he has not seen her for so long a time."

Betty flung her arms around him and hugged him tight. "I know," said she, "but oh, 'Patkin, darling! I never was so frightened in all my life! For if you had fallen, what would we have done? We could never have found you again, even if you weren't killed."

"Oh, well," said Libellula, noting with his keen eyes that 'Patkin was very much depressed at having been the cause of such a scare, "oh, well, you know, we could have found him. And it wouldn't hurt him much —nor any one of you, for you're so little and light, you wouldn't fall hard. Doubtless you'd be rumpled—but that would soon straighten out. So never mind."

Really he was a very kind-hearted monarch, this king of all the kingdoms in this part of the world—and very democratic, too.

"If you want to go closer to her," suggested he, after a moment, "suppose I take you down there on to one of those tall reeds that grow by the lily-pool. You can be near her, and watch her to your heart's content—and yet be perfectly safe."

That was a suggestion that they eagerly accepted, you may be sure. 'Patkin whined with delight at the thought of it, and gave both the children a kiss, hurriedly, out of the fulness of his heart. "I wish you knew her," said he as they began to descend, "oh, how I wish

you knew her. Then you'd understand. And I wish she knew you."

Swinging down, Libellula darted this way and that above the water for a moment, and circled about; and then he floated along with them, nearer and nearer to the Lady, as she stood looking at a clump of Harebells, and almost brushed her pink cheek with one of his wings as he finally settled toward the reed he had spoken of. And she exclaimed, "Oh! There's that lovely dragon-fly again! You beautiful creature—aren't you a big fellow? And don't you do wonders in keeping the mosquitos away for me? There's hardly one any more; indeed, there isn't."

She looked right at him, and was indeed talking right to him; and he chuckled as he came lightly to rest on the reed. "You bet," said he, "there'd be plenty of the vampires if I weren't around." But she did not seem to hear that. Anyway she did not answer.

They feasted their eyes on her; and she was indeed a sweet and lovely Lady, with tender eyes and a smiling mouth that was yet not all smiles. "Isn't she beautiful?" said 'Patkin, trembling all over with the joy of being near her, "could any one help loving her?"

"Indeed, I don't see how they could," said Betty, giving him an extra tight squeeze, "she *is* beautiful, 'Patkin —and sweet. And I love her already."

"So do I," said Billy, promptly. Whereupon 'Patkin kissed them both again, eagerly. "That's the new gardener," he whispered as a man came toward her, touching his cap—a younger man than Alec and not quite so big a one, perhaps. "You know the Countess spoke of him."

He was showing something to her—it looked like a branch of some plant—and they talked about it. "I like ver' much-a to learn, if you plees, ma'm," he was saying as he looked at her with soft, shy brown eyes, "I same as policeman here, I t'ink. Mak-a' de flowers to behave, so they no fight, no use-a bad word. You plees-a tell me how. I do all you say. No can leave-a by himself, dees-a flowers."

The Lady laughed and nodded, taking the branch from him. "That's just the truth, Angelo," said she, "that's what a gardener is—a flower policeman, keeping the outlaws in order; a guardian of the peace. And you are learning nicely, I'm glad to see. That looks very fine indeed—that border that you've done this morning. Now come here, and we'll attend to these dahlias next. They're an unruly lot. Dear me! I hope things won't get ahead of us again like this! It just ruins the garden."

"Why shouldn't we be unruly, I'd like to know," said one of the Dahlias very suddenly, "I don't propose to

take the trouble to do anything that they don't make me do."

"Neither do I," said another, with a chuckle, "it's no fun at all unless you can do the unexpected."

"*We*'re all just as wild, really, at heart, as anything—as you are, you big baby of a Daisy, you," said a third, looking down at something that was half hiding at her feet, "oh, I will *not* keep still about your being here. Why should I?"

"But you aren't wild," said the Daisy, wrathfully, "none of you are wild at all. *I'm* the only wild, free thing among you!"

There was a great jeering and laughing and scoffing at this, in which every plant in the garden joined—at least every plant that was within hearing. And through it there rose the greatest clamor of voices, every one claiming to be more wild than every other, as if this were the greatest distinction that plant families could enjoy. And of course, when you stop to think of it, perhaps it is. There is certainly something about having a beginning away back at the beginning of the world that is more inspiring than being obliged to confess a hothouse or a nursery start.

The children and 'Patkin were very much astonished at this dispute, and at the general lack of good feeling and good manners. "I do declare," said Betty, "I never

would have believed it! If they behave like this, I should think they would have to do something with them."

"Don't you see that's just what they are doing?" said Libellula, "all this forenoon they have been busy with them along the south border. And early this morning I overheard the Lady tell Angelo that after the Dahlias were 'staked' and 'pinched out,' they would go at the roses."

The Dahlias overheard him; and they set up the greatest commotion among themselves, scolding and quarreling, and behaving worse and worse.

"What will they do with them? What does 'staked' mean, and 'pinched out'?" asked Billy.

"Watch out; I'll take you over where they are and you can see," was Libellula's answer. And straightway he rose and swept across the space between them and where the Lady and Angelo were now at work—and above this space he hovered, zig-zagging to and fro slowly, so that they could see and hear all that was going on.

"You see, Angelo," the Lady was saying, "every kind of plant grows at the *tips* of its branches, always. Can you remember that? You must—for all the rest that I am going to tell you starts at that. See here! See this Dahlia—here is a branch, and here is a branch, and here—and here," she pointed out each one as she men-

tioned them, Angelo looking on very earnestly, "and here," she went on, touching the middle and longest one, "is the main branch or trunk of the plant—the leader, that is ahead of all the rest, and will always keep ahead, gaining more and more on the others every day—unless something happens to it. It's going to grow so fast indeed, that all these others will be starved because it will be stronger than they, and can and will take their food from them. So we are going to make something happen to it, Angelo—we policemen——and make it give the others an equal chance. Can you guess what it is we shall do?"

Angelo looked hard at it and then at the ground; and then Billy leaned over and shouted, "Oh, I know! Cut off its head, cut off its head!" and though he did not hear him they were sure, the young Italian looked up with a smile at last and said, "Maybe we no let him have-a de chance at all. We kill-a him, maybe?"

She nodded. "Yes, we kill it—only we say we pinch it out—so." And right down close to the little branches that surrounded this big, strong central branch, she pinched it out as she spoke. And the children heard every one of the little branches heave a sigh of relief, and whisper among themselves, "*Now,* maybe we shall get enough to make *us* grow."

"Now you do this with all these Dahlia plants," said

the lady, "and that will keep them from getting so tall and top-heavy—and besides it will give them more branches to blossom on. I'd like to see them this year make full and bushy plants, instead of spindling up to the sky!"

"That's what they did last year," explained 'Patkin to the children, "such tall, sprawly things you never saw —for there wasn't a stake strong enough to keep them upright."

"Here is one that I am going to cut back farther than that," she called, standing in front of one that was already as high as her shoulders, and much heavier at the top than at the lower part, "see, Angelo? It will make it later in blossoming—but I'd rather wait for the flowers than have it in this shape."

"If you plees, ma'm, why you pinch-a him so much down?" asked the gardener, scowling and trying to make out her reason. It was more than he could guess, though, and he shook his head.

In the way that the children already loved, she smiled at him, and explained. "What did I tell you about how plants grow?" she asked first, "where do they do their growing?"

"Plants he grow at the top of his-a head," said Angelo solemnly. Which made Billy and Betty laugh so hard that 'Patkin and Libellula joined in.

"More than that," said the Lady, pointing to a side branch.

"At the top of *all* his-a heads," corrected Angelo.

"That's right," said she, "at the *top* of every branch—or the tip of every branch, which is just the same thing. Now this plant has a lot of branches away down here near the ground that are just little short, weak things—because up here, nearer the top, it has a lot more, as well as its main branch, to rob them of the food they need. These little, weak branches are just where I would like to have it begin to bush out, though—instead of at these upper ones. So in order to make them grow—"

"We must pinch-a *all* dese bigga branch out," finished Angelo, eagerly.

"Exactly! And that is something else you must remember, Angelo. The branches *next below* the ones you cut off, are the branches that will grow; never the branches down below these. So if you want to make anything grow away down at the ground, pinch it out just a little above the ground—or cut it off, as old Simon showed you to cut off the hedge plants beyond the vegetable garden that had grown top-heavy. You remember?"

Angelo remembered; and so did 'Patkin. "I could get through that hedge anywhere a year ago," said he,

"but it's branched so thickly right down to the ground now, since he cut it as old Simon showed him, that hardly a rabbit could get through."

They floated gently back and forth for awhile, watching the garden work and noting how careful Angelo was to do exactly what the Lady had told him. "That boy is all right," said 'Patkin at last; "he'll be a fine gardener in just a little while. I'm so glad to know it—for my Lady was troubled at losing old Simon, and the flowers have not all behaved their best—as we found out this morning when they were talking over their diet. But Angelo will soon know what to do."

"Really," said one of the Dahlias that had been pinched out and staked—that is, tied to a nice green stake that had a bird carved on its top and painted all the bright colors of the living bird, "do you know, I feel a great deal better. After all, there is something about being orderly that is pleasanter than being disorderly; and I believe I'm not going to dislike it so much—when I get used to it."

The Daisy that was hiding at her feet, answered. "Anybody that doesn't like everything in this garden," said she in a voice of strongest conviction, "would be utterly wrong at heart. See how they have treated me! Like one of the rightful residents—and I don't have to hide any longer, for the Lady said I was to stay; and

what's more, she said, 'Welcome, little common Daisy. You've ventured in, now we will try and make you one with all the rest.' So you just wait and see what a plant I am going to become! And what marvelous blossoms I am going to show! Why, it's just an inspiration to be in such a place as this."

"Dear me," whispered Betty as she heard all this, "isn't it nice to have them learn better than to do as they were doing? Now I can begin to love them as I love the Countess and little Morning-glory. But who could love such rough, rude creatures as they were, when we heard them quarreling so?"

"Rain is coming," said Libellula, scanning the heavens with his all-seeing eyes, "and I suppose I ought to take you home, for it may not do you any good. He is likely to come in rollicking mood, and when that's his spirit, he isn't over gentle."

"Indeed, yes—please take us home at once," cried Betty, "I don't know what would happen to us while we're in this state, if even a single drop fell on us. Let us hurry!"

"Oh, there's plenty of time," said Libellula, "he won't arrive for fifteen minutes or more; and I must do a little work on the way. Don't worry, though; I'll see that you are under cover long before the first of his heralds are near." He seized some winged thing as he

finished speaking, and in a trice had dropped the remnants of its lifeless carcass, without slowing down a bit. "You see," said he, "I have a pretty wide field to cover, and I have to be at it constantly if I am to get away with anything like the number of Anopheles and Musca and Culex and such, allotted to one of my size and speed and strength. But I manage to do my part, I think," and again he caught something that was making frantic efforts to dodge him, and again the same performance was gone through with.

Betty shivered. It certainly was not the pleasantest thing in the world, this savage hunting in midair; but then she reflected that the things he hunted were very great torments to everything else—something like wolves and bears and lions, that devour little children and grown-up people, too, if they get the chance. That made her feel better about it. Maybe, indeed, one of these mosquitos would have bitten Billy, or herself—or 'Patkin's Lady—or Alec, or somebody that they cared a great deal for, and made them sick with chills and fever.

And how the gnats and flies bothered the poor horses and cows, she remembered. It was a good and great work that he was doing, after all—this wonderful King Libellula, truly the dragon of the air, the terror of its lawless, wicked vagabonds—the destroyer, as Dulcinea had said, of destroyers; who, with his two pairs of

monstrous wings could go faster than the fastest railroad train, and with his two thousand facet eyes could see into every part of the earth and heavens at once! He was quite awe-ful to think about; and she was thankful indeed that he was their friend and not their enemy —for over and over again she saw that whatever he chose to destroy, he destroyed.

"Now we'll take another turn around the garden," said he, interrupting her thoughts, "and then I'll put you down right at your door. This sultry heat that comes ahead of Rain is a time when I am especially useful, you know; for then Anopheles cling and cling and come out in greatest numbers. So I always like to get after them then, especially if there's any one around to draw them."

They found the Lady and Angelo, the gardener, hurrying to tie up a great, weak growth of some sort—a vine they called it, and Betty said it looked to her like a Wistaria, but she was not sure; and it had not a word to say. Indeed, it seemed to be rather sulky, just as everything else had been, until they were disciplined into order and good manners.

"I want it to climb up here first," said the Lady, "and then run along there and blossom all the way under those windows. So we will do just the other way about than we did with the Dahlias, Angelo. Cut off all the *side*

branches—every one!—and that will make this top branch or leader do all the growing; which means that it will grow twice as fast, almost, as it would if left to itself. See how that is? It grows faster than the rest anyway; if we take away all but itself, it will get all the food, and grow faster still. Then when it has got to the top of the trellis, we'll let it branch, away up there—and these branches will run along under the windows and their blossoms will be just where I want them."

She smiled again at Libellula as she saw him dart by, and he dipped his wings to her; and then away he went for the Avenue of Hives, coming to earth before the cavern in just an instant, it seemed.

"Why, it isn't far," said Billy, as Betty helped him down.

"Indeed, no—it isn't more than a hundred feet," said 'Patkin.

"But it would take us a good while to walk that far, now," said Betty, shaking her head, "aren't we fortunate to have such wonderful friends here? Thank you, dear good Libellula, for being so kind to us. We shall never forget it."

"I'll be around when Rain has finished his visit," said Libellula, "meantime, I'd stay well under cover, if I were you. These walks are turned into deep rivers that would be many times over your heads; and it won't be

safe for you anywhere except in your high and dry cave, for some time after he has gone."

"We'll stay in—close and snug," they all cried. And so he waved them good-by, and soared aloft, winging back in the direction whence they had come, toward the pond and its rich hunting grounds.

In just a few minutes Mr. Gryllus hopped in. "Hello," said he, "back in good season. I'll keep you company during the storm; I don't like getting my feet wet, myself."

Of course they had to tell him all about their wonderful visit to the garden; and seeing 'Patkin's Lady; and everything that had happened since they left him, indeed. But during it all 'Patkin himself was very silent, sitting with a far away look in his eyes, and often sighing deeply. At last Betty went to him and put her arms around him. "What is the matter, dear old dogsie?" said she, "why are you sad?"

"S—sh," said he, "please don't disturb me, Betty darling. I'm only just a little sad—and that's to be expected. For you see I am trying to remember every word my precious Lady said to the new gardener—and make it into poetry! So I beg of you—"

She tiptoed away of course, and warned Billy and Mr. Gryllus. And they were very careful not to make very much noise or to talk very loudly, until 'Patkin himself

rejoined them, wagging his tail hard and looking unusually proud and happy. Then "Did you get it done?" asked Mr. Gryllus, "if you did I'll bet you're hungry. Making poetry is awfully hungry work, I've been told."

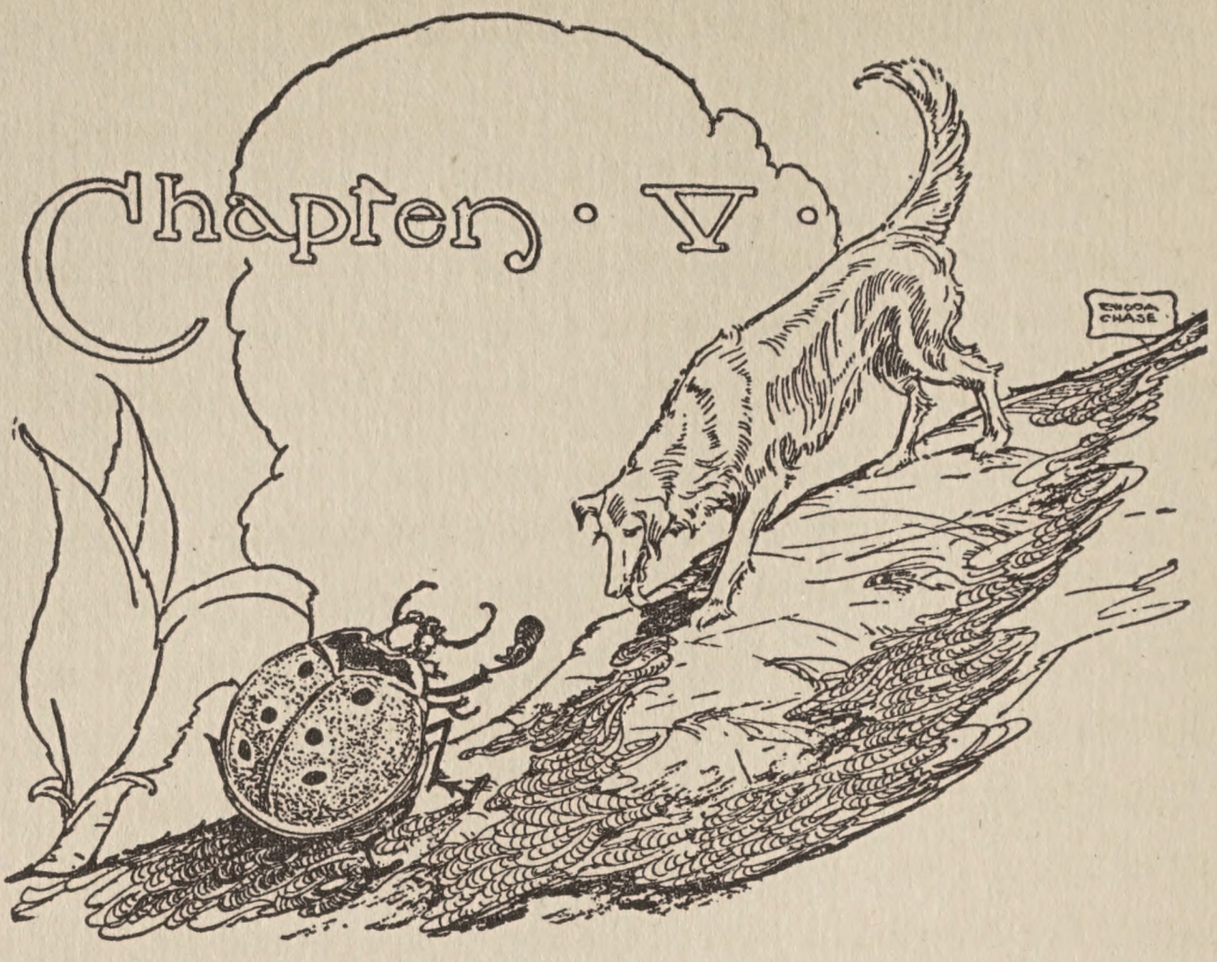
"Yes, it's done," said 'Patkin, "and I am hungry—but not so hungry as these two children must be. And what are they going to eat?"

"Why, I've found some delicious nuts," said Betty, "that the wind must have blown in. See, here is a lot of them." And sure enough there was—a little pile of winged seeds of the maple, that had swirled around and lodged in the cavern, brought by the wind that came ahead of Rain. So they had a fine luncheon of these and then 'Patkin read them his doggerel.

A PRUNING SONG

At their tips plants always grow,
This is the first thing you should know;
Then, when a shrub or plant's bereft
Of any portion, that that's left,
Grows faster to make up what's gone,—
Which is the reason any one
That knows about it, can be sure
Of doing just the thing to cure
A choked-up plant, or one that's spindly
And run to top, and thin and dwindly:
Out of the first kind you should prune
A great many branches, just as soon
As you are able,—right down to the ground

Cut them off, within and around,
Until the tangle is made thin,
And air and sunlight can get in:
The opposite thing is the thing to do
When a plant's too tall, and has too few
Low side shoots, and is too weak
To support itself,—for such you'll seek
To induce branching that's strong and dense;—
So at the top you must commence,
And cut it down to where you see
The strong new branches ought to be;
Cut it 'way down, for branches grow
From those buds that are next below
The place where you cut,—they seldom come
From lower down buds,—though there are some;
For growth is always at the TOP,
And even pruning can't make it stop!



THE ROYSTERING BUCCANEERS

IT got quite dark in this deep little cave of theirs, while it was storming; but they did not mind any of it as much as Betty had been afraid they were going to. Of course they could hear the thunder, and see the lightning flashes; but somehow they felt pretty snug and happy, tucked away as they were. And then Mr. Gryllus hailed the queerest creature imaginable, and induced it to come in; and this was a diversion.

They noticed her when she was quite a distance away —a shapeless sort of figure that seemed to be carrying a lantern, and hurrying along as if she wanted to get home

before the storm broke. Mr. Gryllus hopped around and whirled about at sight of her and said "Good! The very person!" Then he called out, at the same time waving his right horn invitingly, "Come on in, Miss Photuris. Here's a nice dry shelter for you—and you'll be very welcome."

Uncertainly, she advanced, shuffling along—a very diffident acting individual. And she did come in, though she said nothing either to Mr. Gryllus or to them. When she got inside they saw that it was not light from a lantern that shone around her, but light that actually came from her own body. It made the little cavern quite nicely light all over it, though of course its high and vaulted roof still held mysterious shadows.

He presented her; and the children and 'Patkin greeted her duly, and did everything that hospitality demands hosts shall do when they have visitors. But not a word could they get out of her. She was as dumb as an oyster.

"You've seen her before, lots of times," said Mr. Gryllus, "but it's hardly to be expected that you'd recognize her now. Don't you remember the glow-worms that you've found shining in the grass? Well, she's one of 'em."

"Oh, goody," cried Billy, eagerly, "then I can ask her what makes her shine, can't I?"

Mr. Gryllus snickered. "You can ask her anything you want to," answered he, "but she won't answer. She doesn't shine as a talker, whatever she may do as an illumination."

"Dear me," interposed 'Patkin, "they do use some big words here, don't they?"

Mr. Gryllus whirled about and looked at him. "Why shouldn't we?" said he in his sprightly way, "haven't any dictionaries to bother us. Can use 'em as big as we choose." Which did not seem a very sensible remark to Betty as she thought it over—but she reflected that it was perhaps a good deal to expect sense all of the time.

They gave up trying to talk to Miss Photuris after a time, and devoted themselves altogether to cracking their nuts and eating them; and at last the storm was over, and she stole away unknown to them—for as soon as the light returned from out of doors, her own was so much dimmed that they did not realize it.

And then along came Libellula again, to take them once more for a flight wherever they would go. "I'd like to show you my kinsfolk, though," said he as they were getting themselves settled between his wings, "unless there's some special place where you want to spend the afternoon."

There were of course a great many places that they wanted to go; but none of them promised better than this

Into the air he soared and away over meadows and roads and woods. . . . And then they came on such a funny pair!

which he suggested, so they voted for it at once. And into the air he soared, and swept away over the meadows and woods and roads, at such a rate of speed as they had never dreamed of—so that the meadows and woods and roads just flew past them underneath! My, what a ride that was! And after the storm how clear and delicious the air was, with the sky bluer than they had ever seen it, and the earth greener. They were a very happy trio, notwithstanding the fact that they were in a very strange predicament—and had no idea how they were to get out of it. Once in awhile that thought came over Betty and made her heart sink a little; but there were so many things to see and enjoy that such heart-sinking did not last long. And then they came on such a funny pair!

They were riding on a southwest wind, these two; and as they came up to them, each was waving at the other one of the two long feathers that he wore in his skull-cap—or were they horns, like Mr. Gryllus'? And each was bowing ceremoniously to the other; but each wore an evil little grin just the same, Betty noted. Libellula kept right alongside of them so that she had a fine chance to see them, and to hear what they were saying, too. And as they were very intent upon each other and their own affairs, they never noticed Libellula nor the children nor knew that they were observed. So

they talked quite freely—something their class does not generally do.

"You are of the Greenjackets, I perceive," piped the plump one, puffing a little from his efforts to hang on to his precarious footing, and rolling his eyes amazingly.

"None other," answered his funny acquaintance with a stiff little bow, and an unpleasant little smirk, "while you, sir, it is plain, are a Rosycoat."

"Quite right, quite right," said the first, "that I am."

Then silence fell, and they whirled along—pleasantly enough and uneventfully, for a time. Greenjacket began humming a little refrain, in which Rosycoat joined, after a bit; and presently they broke into a song with which both were familiar, it seemed, even though they were strangers to each other until a moment before.

SONG OF THE BRIGANDS

"Riding on a summer breeze,
All day I travel at my ease
—On a breeze, as I please, at my ease!—
An Aphid bold am I,
I roam abroad on high,
In search of such adventure
As some probably would censure
With a shocked and pained 'oh, my!'

Each has six billion brothers,
Sisters, cousins, aunts, grandmothers,
—Billion brothers, grandmothers and others!—
For Aphids bold are we,

Who sail the airy sea—
In wickedness we revel,
We'd *hate* being on the level!
We're a bad lot, you'll agree.

Terror to all hearts I strike!
And that's the sort of thing I like;
—On a hike so to strike do I like—
An Aphid bold am I,
Which is, I presume, why
I search for tender verdure—
It's the only thing will nurture,
A rascal that's so sly!

But one thing we can't defy;—
Of soap-suds we are mighty shy!
—Never try to defy if you're shy!—
Though a wicked crew we are,
And dreaded near and far;—
For to all it is apparent
Our badness is inherent:
In crime each is a star!"

In the middle of the second line of the last chorus, though, they heard the stout one begin to sniff and sniff. Then he smacked his lips. Then he licked his chops. And then they saw that he was peering this way and that below, balancing himself with one wing outstretched.

"A—ha," he gurgled, "ah—ha—ha! Spice in my nostrils, and honey on my tongue! But I certainly am glad to see *that!*"

The other one—the Greenjacket—looked at once in the direction of his gaze. "My great-great-grandmother!" ejaculated he, "a garden, as I'm alive and starving! A real garden!"

The Rosycoat blinked and blinked, shutting his pop-eyes and opening them again slowly; then he sneezed with a good deal of fuss, Betty thought, looking most unconcerned. Then he edged over sidewise, away from his neighbor. "Really," said he, "really, this air is a trifle—er, brisk—for *me,* at any rate. I think I must bid you good afternoon, Mr. Greenjacket, and descend." And with that he slid off quickly and dropped rapidly down; but the Greenjacket, being slim and nimble, was quite as quick.

"You old pop-eyed, google-eyed, double-dyed robber," he called out as he raced madly after him, "so you think you can beat me to it, do you? Well, I'll show you."

They were of course out of sight almost at once; and Betty and Billy and 'Patkin too, began to ask questions about them. "Why were they in such a hurry?" "Who were they?" "Where were they going?" "Why did they try to get away from each other?" And finally, "weren't they horrid?"

Libellula could not tell them anything very definite. He often passed them in midair like this, he said; but they were a worthless crew to him, in spite of their

rotund and well fed appearance. "I have an idea that some of the little garden folks could tell you about them, though," said he, "for whenever I see them riding on the winds they're heading for a garden. And from the cut of their jib, I don't imagine they are up to anything but mischief. They're an evil looking set of little villains—that's my opinion."

"Mine, too," said 'Patkin with much warmth, "and that is a subject I am not usually deceived about. If ever I saw any creatures just fit for the hangman, it's this same Mr. Greenjacket and Mr. Rosycoat!"

Arriving, however, almost at once in the top of a pear-tree they found so much going on there that these two were forgotten, for the time being anyway. "Here are young kinsmen of the Buzfuz," said Libellula, "as well as distant kinsmen of mine—the Lacewings—working; —kinsmen in the sense that we belong to the same Order, anyway."

"Order of Odd Fellows?" asked 'Patkin seriously—whereupon Betty gave him a warning frown and a poke. But Libellula took no exception to the remark.

"Possibly," said he, "or something like it."

He settled on to a branch of the tree. And at once they saw one of the strangest sights that they will ever see in all their lives—nothing else than the young half-grown Lacewing flies engaged in routing a countless

army of thieves that had taken possession of the tree, and were robbing it of its life blood. It was a wild scene, though they were only youngsters—and like most of the youngsters in this queer part of the world, so different from their parents that none would ever recognize them unless they had been told who they were. They did fearful execution, just the same.

The clan of the thieves was named Psylla—one of the worst set of wretches in the world—but they did not stand a show against the young Lacewings. One of the latter would advance toward the particular brigand which he had picked out to slaughter, and maneuver for a moment, just as the boys at the Orphanage did, when they were going to wrestle for fun—or to fight, as they did pretty often. Then with a sudden terrific rush he would seize him, and lift him high, so that he was powerless to help himself; and holding him there, he would draw out of his body the life fluids, casting him down an empty, shrivelled shell!

Of course it was a dreadful thing to watch; and of course Betty was quite disgusted at the young monsters who could be so savage and merciless. But when she looked around and saw what the brigands themselves were doing, and heard the poor Tree make moan her heart hardened against them.

"Oh," gasped the Tree, "oh, how long must I endure

it? They are taking my life, my very life! Oh, children!—oh, doggie!—suppose a thousand million mosquitos were biting you at once and you had no hands to brush them off—or to scratch the bites with! Can you imagine how you would suffer? Can you imagine the torments? And how sick it would make you! Oh—h, dear!"

They all felt the bites, in imagination, right away; and then they felt how dreadful it would be to have no hands, as the Tree had said, to fight one's own battles with—even though they were nothing worse than insect battles. So as they went clambering over the branches on a tour of investigation, to see all that was happening, —and saw it!—Betty got over even shivering. For every wicked brigand Psylla pushed its long trunk down to the sweet sap under the bark of the tree, and sat there and pumped and pumped for dear life, gorging itself. And all the time the poor tree pleaded with them not to!

"I do declare," said she at last, growing most indignant at the boldness of the creatures, and their insolence when she remonstrated with them, "I do declare I could fight them myself! They *ought* to be eaten up, if the Lacewings want to!"

"Course they ought to," agreed Billy, "nothing's too bad for 'em."

"Right!" said 'Patkin, his hair standing up all along

the back of his neck the way it always did when he was angry, "there isn't anything as bad as something that hurts something else that's *harmless,* when that something else can't help itself—is there?"

This was a little hard to follow, perhaps, but they knew just what he meant. "No!" both of them cried—and the Tree, and King Libellula, from where he sat in the sun, "there is *not!*"

And so they began to wish that there were a great many more of the Lacewings, to hurry the work of rescue. For there were such great numbers of the abominable Psylla! 'Patkin shook the life out of one or two, as he might have shaken it out of a big rat, on the way back to Libellula. But it was useless to try and be of any real help, in the face of such overwhelming hordes.

As they walked they noticed quite a good many shells lying all about—something like the shells of oysters, and some as large as a plate while others were smaller—and Billy tried to pick one up. But to his surprise, and Betty's, it was stuck fast to the tree; and when 'Patkin sniffed of it to see why, if he could, he raised his head with a sharp exclamation. "There's something under it!" said he, "something alive."

"You're right there is," answered a little fat voice from behind them; and turning around they saw a funny

little red figure hurrying along—a figure that looked about as much like a lively balloon gliding toward them as anything they could think of. "And if you're fond of fresh scale meat, I can recommend these as being tender and juicy. My one trouble about them is that I cannot eat half enough!"

In spite of the clumsiness of her form, she ran along at a sharp clip, her little black feet twinkling as she went past them; and notwithstanding this clumsiness she was rather a pleasant little personage, in some way. 'Patkin began to wag his tail at once, and smile at her. "Help yourself, sir," she continued, and pointed towards a shell in front of him, "just claw it loose, and try it. You must be hungry."

Of course he was hungry; for, though he had enjoyed the nuts for luncheon as he always enjoyed sharing the food of his friends, they were not exactly filling to his stomach. So after a glance at Billy and Betty, which they answered with a nod, he did as she told him—that is, he clawed at the shell until it was loosened and flopped over. And then he promptly ate up the plump shell animal that was revealed—a thing about as much like an oyster as its shell was like an oyster's shell.

"Like it?" said the little red creature.

"M—mm,—fairly well," answered 'Patkin, "yes, indeed. I'll try another, if you don't mind."

"Oh, by all means. Try all you want. They're not mine, you know," was the brisk answer, "they're everybody's that likes 'em."

They watched her—at least the children watched her; 'Patkin was busily following her advice—and noted that she had great, clear, black spots on her shining red body. But suddenly she seemed to open in two sections lengthwise and they thought something awful had happened to her!—until they saw that what they had supposed was her body was in reality wing cases—and with the most wonderfully folded up pair of wings inside of them, too, that ever could be imagined.

"Oh," cried Betty, "you can fly, too, can't you?"

"Why, of course I can fly," she looked up at her curiously, twisting her head something like a turtle, "can't you? You know they've always sung that foolish old song to me—'Lady-bug, lady-bug, fly away home, your house is on fire, your children at home!'—as if there were a word of truth in any part of it. I don't live in a house, and my children are never at home!"

"Then you're a lady-bug?" cried Billy, "a really truly lady-bug?"

"Why, certainly I am. What's so remarkable about that?"

"He never saw one before, your lady-bugship—please excuse him," said Betty hurriedly.

"Why, yes, I have seen lots of 'em, Betty," said Billy. "What do you say that for?"

"I mean you've—you've never seen one since we've been *here,*" explained Betty, "of course you've seen a great many at home."

"Well, I've no house to get on fire and my children are in no danger," this old couplet evidently was a serious annoyance to her, "so please don't sing that silly song to me or to any of my clan any more."

"Yes, your lady-bugship," said both of them; then Betty asked about her children. Betty was always interested in the children.

"Well," said Mrs. Lady-bug, "as a matter of fact, my children are not a bit of trouble, as so many people's children are. So I don't have to worry about them the least bit in the world. I tuck 'em away, all snug in their eggs, here and there—under these little loose ends of bark for instance, as I've been doing this afternoon—and there I leave 'em to wake up and break their way out of their egg-shells, and run about all by themselves. You see I could hardly look after so large a family as I have, if they *couldn't* help themselves," she added with a sigh.

"You have a good many children, then?" asked 'Patkin.

"Oh, yes—several hundred."

"My stars! I should think you *would* be glad they aren't helpless," gasped Betty, "that is an awful family!"

"Well, of course I see to it that they are where nice fresh meat is handy—for they love this more than 'Patkin does, even. Really, they'd die if they couldn't have it."

"My stars!" said Betty again, utterly at a loss for other words. The line which she had learned in the Countess Spencer's song came to her mind—"How strangely things differ in appetite!" Babies!—eating fresh meat!—But after all, little chicks didn't live on milk; and perhaps Mrs. Lady-bug's children were like old Cackle's—at least they hatched out of an egg, it seemed, just the same. Perhaps that accounted for the difference in tastes.

"I'd like to know what kind of shell-fish—I mean shell-animals—these things are," said 'Patkin, swallowing another with a good deal of gusto, "they're quite tender and good."

"They're another thing that torments *me,*" came the voice of the Tree suddenly, while a sigh shook all its leaves and branches, "oh, it is a hard life I'd have, I tell you, between the pirate Psyllas, and these sneaking, skulking shell creatures, if it weren't for my good little friends you've met here."

"You poor thing," cried Betty, "doesn't anybody take care of you?"

The Tree shook itself and lifted its head a bit. "Oh, I don't need to be taken *care* of," it answered, "I'm all right. But of course I'm pretty glad of these good friends. Nobody likes to be friendless."

"No, indeed," answered the three heartily, "we should say not."

"Once," the Tree went on reflectively, "some of the Overlords did try to doctor me up—when nothing on earth ailed me, you understand, except that I was being tormented beyond all tree endurance by these Terrapin Scales and the Psylla—and they sprinkled me over with some terrible stuff that killed all these, my little friends, without killing all of the brigands. And *then* maybe I wasn't in misery for a while! Never try to do anything like that unless you know *all* about it; let that experience of mine teach you that. I give you my word, I nearly died!"

"Alec is always very careful," said Billy, "when he sprinkles the trees and things—for he says just that that you said—'A man never ought to do this 'nless he knows what's *what!*' So I guess it wasn't Alec that did that."

"No, it wasn't," answered the Tree, "that wasn't his name—but I don't believe I remember what it was.

However, that doesn't matter. All that matters is that you take the advice I've given you and Alec has given you—and don't do what that other fellow did."

"But it does seem as if we might do something to help get rid of these things," said Betty, "something to help Mrs. Lady-bug, who says she can't begin to eat 'em all up. Don't you suppose we could? It's just awful to leave 'em all here, biting you and biting you."

Sighing, the Tree swayed and shivered. "Yes, of course it is," said he, "but the one thing that can be done, can't be done when I'm awake. Only when I am sleeping in the winter, could you be of any help. And even then you'd have to be careful not to hurt all my little friendly soldiers—that's what I call Lady-bug and her relatives and clan—for they tuck themselves in around my feet when it comes winter, and go to sleep too, close against me sometimes. So you see what a difficult situation I am in."

"Just the same, there must be some way," insisted Betty, with great confidence in her tone, "and when we get home I'm going to find it out—and do it."

"Well, of course I wish you might. But I'm not so unhappy as I might be, all things considered. The Lady-bugs and the Lacewings—bless them!—are good and loyal friends. And as long as nothing happens to them, I'm pretty well off—though of course I could do

a great deal better if I were free from the pests you see drinking my sap."

"Of course you could," said she sympathetically, "I never had any idea there were such things going on."

"Well, there are," answered the Tree ruefully, "everywhere, all of the time."

They went back, very thoughtfully, to where they had left Libellula, basking in the sun; and got onto his back in silence and rode for quite a time without saying anything. Then Betty suddenly spoke. "Now I know," said she, "what it is to have a Mission-in-Life. Mrs. Bell was talking to me about it the other day, and I didn't understand, somehow. But I do now—for I've found one."

"What is it?" asked 'Patkin, looking a little anxious.

"Why, it's to rescue all the poor trees and things. And I wish I could go home right this minute and begin."

But being assured that Mission-in-Life did not mean anything that would take her away from them, 'Patkin said no more—and was soon absorbed in looking over at the earth as they sped along. And so he was the one to discover that something was wrong in the corner of the garden where some young Hollyhocks lived, as they came above this.

"Listen," he cried, and pointed to them with his nose,

"listen! What was that that Sunbeam said? Somebody's sick, I think."

They all listened, and Libellula slowed down.

"Wake up!" They could hear Sunbeam's voice quite plainly, though it was not loud and he was speaking so far beneath them. "Wake up! Hold up your heads, my dears. Why it's long past noon! What does this mean? And it isn't time to droop them again. What ails you? Hold up *your* head—and *you,* hold up *yours.*"

"Oh, I can't hold up my head," cried one, "I am waked up, but I cannot hold up my head! Oh, please don't!"

"My head I can't hold up either," said the next to her. "And I didn't sleep all night," moaned another. "Oh, how sick I am!" "And I can't hold up *my* head —oh, dear!"

"Why can't you hold up your heads, I should like to know? Why didn't you sleep? How are you sick?" demanded Sunbeam. He was rather severe too, as became one always up and doing and right on time; and he searched each with the most penetrating glance you ever could imagine. No use trying to conceal anything from him, ever; Betty saw that.

All his sharp questions brought just the same answer, though; and each Hollyhock spoke it so feelingly and with such evident sincerity that the sound of their an-

swer was really quite emphatic, and made even the Sunbeam blink. "I don't know," said they, one and all, "*my* head is heavy!"

"Well, well," said he, "this is evidently serious. For a minute I almost thought you—you were shamming. But that's because I have so lately been on indoor duty and had a lot of lazy folks to tend. Of course I know *you'd* never do such a thing as that—when I stop to think. Well, well—you don't know! And *all* your heads are heavy!"

"Something happened this morning," said one, weakly.

"Yes," said her sister, "when Rain was here."

"I think it's measles," shuddered another.

"Or vaccination!"

"Why, it couldn't be that," whispered Billy—for Libellula had descended so that they were very near the sick plants now. But Betty put a finger on her lips; and Sunbeam, glancing at them, nodded. "Of course," he said, also in a whisper, "it couldn't be that! But she's too sick to know, if we told her different."

Aloud he said to the Hollyhocks, "When Rain was here, eh? While I was away this morning?"

One or two were able to sigh a "yes" which was barely audible. He shook his head, and looked very serious—as serious as it is ever possible for a fine and able-bodied

Sunbeam to look. "Bad business," said he, in another aside to the children and Libellula, "very bad business. Too bad I had to leave, even for a little while."

"What ails them?" said Billy.

"Is it catching?" asked Betty.

"Oh, it's one of the Torments," said he, "tiny invisible creatures that ride in the chariots of Rain—the rain-drops, you know—and so slide in when I am not on guard, and get under the skin of the flowers, and make them so sick—so *very* sick—" here he glanced at the little Hollyhocks to see if they were listening, "that sometimes they die."

"Well, it's something just all of the time!" exclaimed Betty in an indignant voice, "isn't it?"

"Yes," said the Sunbeam gravely, "that's just what it is. And these invisible Torments are worse than the ones you can see; for those, you at least can fight. But these you can never reach, once they are under the plant's delicate skin—for that covers and protects them, you see. Oh, they are a wicked enemy, believe me!"

"How is any one ever to overcome them?" asked 'Patkin, to whom battles and fighting always made a very strong appeal, though he was a most peaceable and well-behaved dog.

"Well," said the Sunbeam, "there is a way—but

there's only one! That's never to give them a chance, really."

"How do you go about it?" asked Betty.

"Well, you have to be pretty wise—and patient—and always on guard. I've heard old Simon telling about it often, in days gone by."

"Then you can tell us," said Billy.

"I don't know about that," answered Sunbeam, "exactly. But I can try." And with that he too sat down on Libellula's back and began, by announcing in a loud voice the title of his recitation. "Spray, I pray!" he cried dramatically—and so suddenly indeed that they all jumped!

SPRAY, I PRAY!

"Two kinds of enemy in the garden,
Engage the attention of its warden.

Insects!—and Blights—or Fungous Diseases!
Oh, wretched plant on which either seizes!

Insects, however, can always be seen,
But a Blight will elude the vision most keen.

That's how it is that their mischief is done,
Without your suspecting it has begun.

The maladies, too, that they occasion,
Are of the incurable persuasion.

It follows, therefore, that to prevention
Instead of cure, you must give attention.

So everything must be fortified,
By frequently spraying with fungicide.

This promptly destroys all bad bacteria,
The instant they touch a plant's exterior!

A mixture called 'Bordeaux,' ready to use,
Is the best fungicide that you can choose.

Dilute it according to directions,
And spray things often, in sickly sections.

* * * * * * * * *

So much for the Blights: of course Bugs and Worms,
Are not so elusive, nearly, as germs.

But for these, as for those, it's best to prepare,—
Though you can't spray Insects till they are there!

There's a secret, though, about these creatures,
That is one of spraying's most vital features.

And unless it is duly emphasized
In dealing with them you will be surprised.

For as often as not it may appear,
They thrive on poisons—which surely is queer!

The secret is this:—some have jaws and chew,
And some only bills to draw liquid through.

And plant juice drinkers can't be affected
By poison, for their food is protected.

The only means for their execution
Is soapsuds spray, or lime-salt solution.

These shrivel them up as dry as a bone,
If you shower them well, then leave them alone.

Be sure, though, that not a one has eluded
  This wetting down, when it is concluded.

For every insect the spray fails to touch,
  Lives on to pester and worry you much.

Because where there's one there soon is a score,
  And a score in no time grows to be more!

* * * * * * * * *

That's all there is about insects that drink;
  And now of the others a moment we'll think.

The insects with jaws, that eat, should be fed
  On the poison known as arsenate of lead.

Always keep watch for their tell-tale tracks—
  The holes in leaves which reveal their attacks,—

Then sprinkle this poison plentifully
  Over plants in whose leaves such holes you see.

* * * * * * * * *

This, briefly, is what there is to spraying,
  And insects and fungous pests allaying."

"Dear me, don't I wish I had my copy book here, to write all that down in it," sighed Betty, as he finished.

"I'll remember it for you," said 'Patkin, "don't worry. It comes natural for me to do so, you know."

"Does it?" Billy looked at him wonderingly, "why, do you suppose?"

"Why?" said 'Patkin, "why—because I'm a dog, I suppose."

"But I don't see how that's any reason," said Billy, rather dissatisfied.

"Neither do I," said 'Patkin, "but it's the only thing I could think of."

They had started on, and were quite near home when Betty suddenly screamed, "Oh! There's that green monster we saw first of all, when we got here! Oh, he's glaring at us now, savage as anything! Oh, please, dear King Libellula, don't let us get anywhere near to him, will you? I know he'll chew us all right up, if he gets the chance."

"Where is he?" asked Libellula, shortly.

"Right there, on the leaf of that great corn-stalk. *Oh!*—isn't he terrible?"

"O-ho," laughed Libellula, "*that* fellow? Never you mind him. He never hurt anything in the world except the farmer's crops—and things like that. He's a vegetarian."

"A veg-e—veg-e—what?" said Billy.

"A veg-e-tar-i-an. He only eats vegetables; and he wouldn't eat you if you tried to get him to—for he couldn't. At least I don't believe he could. But he gets away with enough of the green things of this world, make no mistake about *that*."

"Who is he?" asked 'Patkin, glaring back at him as hard as he could.

"Melanoplus, of the clan of leapers—leapers in the grass they are, you know. Why, they can travel—"

"Grass-*hoppers!*" cried Betty, interrupting as it suddenly came to her, "oh, please forgive me for being so rude, Libellula, sir—but I just thought of it. Grass-hoppers!"

"Surely," said he agreeably, "grass-hoppers if you prefer calling them that. It means the same thing, I guess."

"Why, of course that's what he is; and I won't be afraid of him ever again; I don't care how big he is," said 'Patkin, "he'd never do *us* any harm."

"But he eats up all the farmers' oats and grains sometimes, and does a lot of harm that way," said Billy.

"That's the reason he looked so angry when we said 'oat-meal,' I'll bet anything," Betty nodded her head as she spoke, and it did seem reasonable, "he thought we ate what he wanted."

"Well, I expect you do," said Libellula, "and of course he's no friend of yours—never think of him as that, for an instant. But he can't do you children any harm, directly—or he's not likely to try to. For he doesn't know how to bite anything really but grasses and green things."

"Just the same, he's got awful jaws—and teeth," said Billy, remembering how he had chanked at them.

"And an awfully mean disposition," added Betty, as she glanced again in the direction of this particular Melanoplus. He still sat just as she had first seen him —and was still staring at them with that bland expression that made her dislike him so very much. And there he sat and stared until they were out of sight!

It was too late for any more visits that day; so Libellula brought them at last to their cavern door, and they dismounted and said good night. And away he sailed, swifter than he had yet flown during all of the day, as they watched him. "I should think he'd be tired," said Betty, "carrying us all day—but he doesn't act so."

They stood on the great rock in front of their cave for a long time, watching the sun drop lower and lower and listening to the voices of different things—and Betty began to feel very sad and homesick, wondering, oh, ever so hard!—how they were going to get back; and how long before they could go. Deep in her heart there was an awful feeling that maybe they could *never* find the way—maybe they would always have to stay here, and be little creeping things down close to the earth, like the little bugs and beetles and tiny flies; always meeting some strange new monsters of this strange world, and always having to go everywhere with some one to guard them from the countless dangers that waited for them on every side.

'Patkin saw that something was the matter, and came close to her and laid his chin up against her breast so that his eyes could look straight up into her face; and there he stood for a long time. And at last she looked down at him, and then put her arms around him and around Billy too; and hugged them very tight and very close, for a long, long hug. Then she felt better, for some reason. And they ran inside to see what the wind might have brought them for supper.

Chapter VI

A DIM KNIGHT OF DARKNESS AND THE SILVER TONGUES OF DAY

THEY found a blackberry which some bird had probably dropped as he was flying over, and this was a very welcome addition to the maple nuts—which they were beginning to grow almost as tired of as they were of nectar. The only way they could eat this great luscious blackberry though, was to stand up and bury their faces in its juicy sides. And you can imagine how they looked, after this!

They laughed merrily at each other, and then scoured off the stains in a puddle that the shower had left, close by—not a puddle to them, to be sure, but a lovely little lake; and then they clambered up into their high, snug chariot of a bed.

But just as they were about to curl down to ride away on the road of dreams, away off somewhere they heard music—singing that was very clear and sweet. "Oh,

it's a wood-thrush," cried Betty, who had learned a good many birds' names, "I do believe!"

"I hear a starling," said Billy, after a moment.

"And there are robins, too," said 'Patkin, "and they are all singing *words*. Listen!"

Sure enough they were!

> "Good even, good even! Good night, good night!
> Sun is setting, Sir Bufo; all is well;
> All's right!
> Good night, good knight."

"Did you ever?" whispered Betty, "I never thought of such a thing! Who do you s'pose they're talking to?"

As if it were to answer her, a different voice altogether came right up out of the ground before their cavern, it seemed—a deep, rich voice. "The evening is ever good indeed, oh friendly Silver Tongues, and the night it is good likewise," it said.

"Who *can* it be?" they wondered, and peered over into the shadows eagerly, this way and that. But, though they could see the light which shone in at the entrance of their cave, it had grown too dark for them to see anything out-doors, beyond it. "This is surely some big and great person, though," said 'Patkin, sniffing with his slender nose in the air, "with a voice like that. It's familiar, somehow—vaguely, very vaguely."

The voice went on:—"You to your airy rest, I to my watchful quest; yours the blue ways of the heavens, in the glow of glad sunlight and singing, mine the brown ways of the earth and of her waters in due season—the quiet of shadows and soft rains and pools. So I wend me, still and soft like the night that moves with me—listening, listening!—my trusty lance at rest, yet ready for an instant blow, when comes an alarum."

"I do declare to goodness," cried Betty, her eyes like the stars in the darkness, "I believe it's a really-truly knight errant, Billy! Oh—don't I wish we could see him! Maybe he's buckling on shining armor this very minute, and taking up his shield! Oh, how I wish it were light!"

There was something very mysterious and delightful in his voice as well as in his words, and they were all in a state of eager excitement over him. But though they listened and watched for the longest time, they did not catch another sound outside. Not even did they see a shadow move. So at last they had to give it up, for they grew so sleepy they could not keep awake another minute. But of course they all three dreamed of knights and tournaments and joustings—and fair maidens in distress and wonderful deeds of valor in their rescue; and when morning came and the voices of the tribe of Silver Tongues fell on their ears once more, they

could hardly wait to be out, and hunting for the strange singer of the night.

It was still quite dark down in their little cavern though, when the Silver Tongues began to sing of the dawn—for of course from their high places they can see it sooner, down over the rim of the world, than anybody else. So Betty and Billy and 'Patkin lay still, listening to them, just as they had often lain when they could not understand what they were saying, at home—and waiting for it to grow lighter. And now they sang another song.

"Good morrow, good morrow! Good day, good day!
Sun is risen, Sir Bufo; you'll soon on
Your way:
Good knight, good day!"

Over and over they sang this—the robins and the thrushes and the starlings and the little song-sparrows and all the rest of the great tribe. And then suddenly there came the answering tones of the mysterious knight!

"The sun of the morrow is risen indeed, oh, friendly Silver Tongues—and I am on my way."

You may believe they were all three out of that bed in a twinkling and scampering to look out! And in just a moment they saw him, coming slowly through the forest of grasses and flowers—beyond Columbine—and soliloquizing, as becomes a true knight. So deep in thought was he that he took no notice of anything, either

to his left or right; but what a weird, ungainly, ugly figure he was! "Oh, dear!" gasped Betty, in spite of herself, "he isn't dressed in armor!"

"Why, he can't be a knight," exclaimed Billy, "he doesn't ride a charger. And see his funny feet!"

"S-sh," said 'Patkin, "can't knights travel differently in different places? And dress differently, too. *That's* nothing. Besides, maybe he's disguised." He did not of course pretend to know much about them; but he liked to find excuses when things seemed to be a disappointment.

Betty shared this quality; and so she nodded her head and gave him a grateful look. "Of course," said she, "they can, I s'pose. And maybe he is."

"Well!" said 'Patkin, as if that settled it.

The knight seemed to be troubled; and they heard him sigh a great sigh as he drew nearer. "By my troth," said he, "such words as those fair young plants have just uttered to me, fill my breast with longing to have merited them; whereas I have done nought that is brave nor great nor fine. What though I slay their mortal foes? I am but slaying my own prey. Truly it is my own appetite that I have esteemed above all else, oh Beautiful Ones and Useful Ones of the garden; so why will ye confound me with praise and thanks? Why make my heart so heavy within me? I am a rough, rude fellow

—that is all—whom creation has given tastes in food that make me useful to your fair selves." He sighed again and again, deeply, and they saw that he was very much downcast.

"Oh, but good Sir Bufo," said Columbine, shaking her dainty head, "you are always our protector, especially when we are young and tender, through all the dreaded hours of night. Without you, how many would be alive at dawn, to greet it? Is it any wonder we praise and thank you?"

"But it is no merit," he insisted, "I am but true to my own hungry self, and I but follow the urgings of my own need and nature."

"That's what every one does," spoke up 'Patkin all at once, looking down from the great stone that projected out from the floor of their cave, "that's what I have heard my Lady say many and many a time. So *that's* no reason they shouldn't thank you."

The dim knight looked all around, but did not see him, because the stone was higher than his head. "Who are you that speaketh?" said he, "and your Lady—who is she?"

"My dear Lady is she who rules here," answered 'Patkin in a very proud voice indeed, "and I am her loyal friend and servant, 'Patkin."

" 'Patkin," said the dim knight, " 'Patkin? By all

rights, you are one I should know full well—for with a certain great dog of that name do I share the affections of a lovely Lady."

'Patkin pricked up his ears and looked down on him, and sniffed this way and that, trying to get just his exact scent. "Why, is it possible," said he at last, "that you are that toad for whom my dear Lady made such handsome provision, when he was young and small, causing a stronghold to be hollowed out for him in the cool earth and a great stone laid over it? All this have I heard her tell, explaining that she wished to beguile him into staying here, where he would devour the hordes who make war upon the flowers."

"How shall I answer that," said Sir Bufo, "save by saying that here in this earthy hollow, which I found so conveniently roofed with a great stone, I have dwelt many a summer, since I was indeed a very small and very nervous youngster, freshly graduated from a tadpole. And sometimes there comes here a very fair Lady, whose voice is sweet as dew in June; and she speaks to me and praises me and tells me I am welcome, and bids me never leave her—which makes me very happy indeed."

"That's she!" cried 'Patkin, wagging his tail very hard and frisking about so that it seemed as if he might be going to jump down off of the stone.

"P-st! P-st!" came softly from somewhere, and Mr.

Gryllus edged out from under a horse-chestnut leaf which had been hiding him. "Don't be too familiar," he cautioned in a low tone, "keep your distance—don't get any closer. He's a bit queer; and he might gobble you up. Mind, now—"

Betty had heard him, in spite of his speaking very low; and she caught hold of 'Patkin's collar. "Oh, Mr. Gryllus! Would he really?" she asked, great sorrow and disappointment in her tone.

"He might not," answered Mr. Gryllus briskly, "then again he might. For he's liable to snap up anything on the move, you see—from force of habit. So just keep your distance, all of you; and no jumping around or frisking, remember. That's *very* dangerous."

"Yes, yes," said 'Patkin, impatiently it must be owned, for he wanted to go on talking to Sir Bufo about his Lady, "yes, yes, I'll be very careful. I won't jump nor frisk—honor bright!" Then to Sir Bufo, who still sat below, once more lost in thought it seemed, he called out again, "That's she. That is my dear Lady, indeed. And you can be no other than that same toad, whom I have often regarded from afar, warned by her not to approach nor to molest him. And I am no other than the great dog of whom you spoke—the same 'Patkin."

"Why, how can that be?" said Sir Bufo, "he is a monster a thousand times greater than myself, whilst you

are a hundred times smaller. You are indeed no bigger than the least of my prey—the underground dwellers who run so wildly; ants, I think some call them."

"This isn't his usual size," Betty began hurriedly, "nor it isn't our size either, if you please, Sir Bufo. We are a little boy and girl from the Orphanage, and 'Patkin is surely a great dog when he is his own true bigness."

"How can that be?" exclaimed Sir Bufo, blinking harder than ever. "How can that be?"

"We don't know," said Billy, unwilling to leave all of the weight of it to his sister, "we don't know, sir; but it's the truth."

Sir Bufo grew great with the greatness of the breath he drew in and his sides heaved and heaved. "Well, well," said he, "well, well! 'Tis passing strange, indeed. For by the pearl in my brow, men and the children of men are greater than this great dog 'Patkin—so great that thousands of my clansmen are trodden under their feet every day; and thousands more brought to their death in wanton sport or folly. Yet here are you, such small creatures that I could transfix you with my good lance without an effort—and eat a hundred of you in ten minutes!"

They drew back a little at this, very cautiously, even though he was below them; for when he opened his

mouth, it certainly did yawn before them like a fiery pit into which it seemed as if they could tumble without moving out of their tracks. And he was such a great huge thing, compared to themselves—as big as an elephant or as an elephant and a half, easily. He noticed the movement and understood the reason for it.

"You needn't be alarmed though," said he, "I shall not. For I am full, for one thing; and for another I like my meals to be livelier than either of you three seem; and for another, you are strange to me. I have never eaten any of you yet; and I don't know how you taste, or whether you would agree with my digestion. So have no misgivings. I do not wish to eat you—and probably shall not."

Surely one of the queerest things about this queer part of the world in which they had so suddenly found themselves, thought Betty, was the very frank way in which its inhabitants talked to you about eating you! They did not seem to have the slightest feeling of delicacy about speaking of you as if you were a chop or a potato or a cabbage, right to your face. Really, it was very disconcerting.

But not wishing to appear to mind it—as long as Sir Bufo did not—she tactfully asked a question that changed the subject. "If you please, Sir Bufo," said she, "are you a knight errant? I never saw one—but

I've read about them. And when we heard you singing last night, I thought you must be."

"Well," said Sir Bufo, blinking and somewhat at a loss—for it is doubtful if he knew just what a knight errant was, and besides that, he was really modest and did not believe in talking of his prowess and good deeds, "it's—hardly that, my dear—hardly that. I—I'm just a hunter—a sort of a rough fellow that prowls around."

"But you rescue the flowers, when they are attacked," she insisted, "and that's what knights errant do—rescue lovely ladies at least. Seems to me as if you prob'ly are."

"If you please, sir," spoke up Billy, "won't you tell us a story? I don't care if you're not a knight errant. I'd just as lief any kind of knight told me a story."

"Well, I can do that," said Sir Bufo, "if you want a story of action. Now just last night, for instance—"

"Yes?" said Betty, encouragingly, as he paused.

"Well now, just last night I got there not a moment too soon. For already a murderous wretch was throttling a young Cosmos and I caught him right in the very act—and soon made away with him, be very sure."

"Oh!—who was he?"

"One of the wicked Agrotis, the wise call them. Others not so learned have dubbed this fellow and his

"Well," said Sir Bufo, blinking, "it's hardly that, my dear—
hardly that."

kind a cut-worm—because they cut the plants down like a scythe, killing a thousand for just a small portion of food. Oh, they're a wicked lot!"

"Where did he come from?" asked Billy.

"Up out of the ground he came, as the night came down. He'd never be so bold as to venture out in daylight, be very sure—but prowls around after it is dark, when there's no one about; at least, no one but me, and the Chlaenius, perhaps."

"But how can a poor worm cut anything?" asked Betty.

"A worm?" exclaimed Sir Bufo, "a *worm?* Beware of a worm! They are of all creatures the foulest and the wickedest—almost. Softly they creep, harmless they look; but in their ugly snouts they carry shears and knives and what-not, to carve and cut and tear your friends the plants. Oh, *beware of worms!*"

"Oh, goodness!" cried Betty, "are they as bad as Aphids?"

"I don't know them," answered Sir Bufo, "but I should suppose they are much worse. For worms eat up; they leave nothing but the bones, picked clean, of the unhappy plant!"

"How awful," shivered Betty, remembering how Alec always scolded if he saw even the prettiest caterpillar hurrying across the ground, and caught him, in spite

of her entreaties,—and scrunched him under a stone!

"But I catch them," went on Sir Bufo, "I steal up—stealthily; or I wait, still as the stone I sit beside, and watch and watch!" It made them all three shiver to hear him say this; and when he leaped into the air with a little short leap to show how softly he stole up, they had all they could do to keep from running as far away as they could get. His great ungainly body was so soft that it made only a dull thud as it came back to the ground; and oh, how huge he was when he lengthened out and his great jumping legs unfolded!

"And then I strike, now here—now there! Never missing! Striking as fast as the miscreants appear. A-ha!—and they are most excellent to eat." He blinked very hard and very swiftly ever so many blinks, and opened his enormously wide mouth and flabbled his tongue in it, with the pleasure of the thought. "Thus on I go through the garden, watching all the ways of it and all the plants, until the morning comes, bringing the heat. Then do I turn back here to my castle, to sit in silence and the dim coolness and ponder all I have done—and have eaten!—until another night falls. And so even now, I will hence."

"And do you hunt all kinds of worms, Sir Bufo," asked Betty, "or just the wicked A—A-gro-tis?"

"By my jewelled head, I do indeed," he answered

with spirit, "I hunt any other buccaneering blatherskite that comes across my path—grasshoppers, crickets—"

"Oh, surely not dear, good Mr. Gryllus!" cried she, shocked.

"Crickets," he repeated—and that was his only answer—then he went on unruffled, "and spiders, flies, beetles, snails, angleworms, sowbugs—anything indeed. Angleworms, by the way, never get over it."

"Never get over your hunting them? I don't see how they could!" whispered Betty with a nervous little giggle.

"No—not my hunting them! They never get over being worms."

"Dear me," said 'Patkin, "that—that seems extraordinary."

"All others do, you know," Sir Bufo explained, "all the other worms and caterpillars that you ever see anywhere, except in the ground. And some of those, too. They graduate. But once an angleworm, always an angleworm."

This was more than they could hope to guess the riddle of. "If you please, sir," said Billy after a moment, "if you please, won't you tell us what is a worm when it isn't a worm?"

This sounded to Betty disrespectful, for some reason; and she was just opening her mouth to explain and ex-

cuse it when, to her astonishment, Sir Bufo answered very seriously and without being in the least disturbed by such a strange question.

"Worms," said he, "when they are not worms are moths or butterflies or beetles or most anything." And then he dove head first under the rocky pile, to his stronghold—leaving them to unravel his meaning the best way they could.

It seemed as if they could not wait to ask some one about it; but there was no one around just then. Even Mr. Gryllus had disappeared while they talked. So they clambered down from their cave and went hand in hand along to hunt something for their own breakfast. And *that* came near to being the end of them!

They had gone but a little way when they came upon a crowd of Formicas quarreling over something, and pushing and jostling each other around at a great rate. And 'Patkin, nose in the air, said, "It's egg."

"Oh, I wish I could have some," cried Billy; "wouldn't they give it to us? Please, let me have some of your egg," he called out, without waiting for Betty to answer him.

They did not appear to hear him, but kept on running back and forth, some dragging it along and others breaking off pieces and running away with them. And so they passed, taking the chunk of egg along with

them; and the children got none of it. But they began to hunt around everywhere, hoping they might find another piece—for 'Patkin remembered all of a sudden that it was his Lady's custom to eat her breakfast in the garden, on fine mornings. "That's where they got that piece," said he, in disapproving tones; "she scatters crumbs for the birds—and I've heard her say she wished they did not draw the ants, too."

At last they did find a very small piece; yet it was large enough for them each to have a good taste. So they sat down on the ground in the shade of an overhanging leaf, to enjoy it.

But in the midst of eating his chunk, 'Patkin sprang to his feet and barked, fiercely and loudly. He could not tell them what it was had made him do it though. "Something," he said in reply to all of Betty's questions, "there's somebody around here! Bow-wow! There's somebody looking at us! Where are they? Who are they? Bow-wow—w-w—wow!"

"There isn't a thing, 'Patkin," said she, "don't you see there isn't? Come on and eat your breakfast, like a sensible doggie. Where could anything hide around here?"

The leaf over their heads bobbed up and down at that; and then over the edge of it slowly and cautiously there appeared the most awful Face!—And it looked right

down at them as if its owner would answer her question with this look.

"Oh!" she gasped. And "Oh!" gasped Billy. "And oh-ho!" gasped and growled 'Patkin, ruffling his neck as usual. But otherwise they never made a sign; for after the one movement which Betty made to catch the dog's collar, and to clutch at Billy as he sat there, they were all three as if turned to ice by the sight of the thing. At least Billy and Betty were; and she held 'Patkin so tightly that he did not move, though he wanted to.

The Face waited a moment, looking at them wonderingly; and then it looked out over the landscape, and nosed along the leaf, surprised to find itself at the edge of something it seemed, instead of in the middle. Then it moved forward a little bit—and their horror grew! For they could see that there was no head or neck. It was set right on to a body—and that body was a great shapeless bag which had to be dragged along on the leaf by stumpy looking feet that had no legs above them! Really, it was the worst looking thing they had ever seen —worse looking than they had any idea anything ever *could* be.

"Is it a dragon?" whispered Billy, watching it and trembling.

"S-sh," said Betty, "dragons eat children. Keep still!"

It moved so slowly and seemed so stupid that she was beginning to have a faint hope they might escape it, if they were very careful, and watched for a chance. So they sat very still, waiting. And this way and that it nosed its headless way; and then it slowly began to bite, bite, bite, into the leaf on which it stood! In almost no time it had bitten a piece right out of it before their very eyes, and was chewing it up—while the Violet to whom the leaf belonged, complained and wept and begged for mercy. So they knew right away that it was the cruelest, as well as the ugliest thing, that there could be in the world!

After it had finished with this first piece, it began to bite in for another; and Betty moved very carefully. "Come," she whispered, "move as still as you can—just *creep* along! Oh, isn't he dreadful? Poor Violet! I'm so sorry for you! Oh, if I were only bigger—"

They got no farther than just out from under the leaf when there was a sharp cry overhead. It was the lady Aea's voice; and then they heard Her Serene Highness Dulcinea calling too—a wild call, which frightened them terribly and made them try to hurry faster. But of course Billy could not go very fast, being lame; and they were still close beside the Violet when there came the most terrible rushing sound, as if the greatest wind that ever was, were blowing. Then there was a whirl and

a swirl of something as black as night between them and the sun, as the sound increased—and both of them were flat on their faces suddenly, blown down by the blast! 'Patkin too, was bowled over, to his great surprise and disgust.

"Get up quickly, and run—*run for your lives!*" cried the Princess, "come! We'll help you," she flew to them and tried to push and pull them to their feet, "Aea! Come and help me! Oh, whatever are you doing here alone, anyway? Hurry, *hurry!*"

They did not need to be urged, you may be sure; but somehow it seemed as if they never could get up—and *never* could get into the deep shadow at the side of the path, toward which the Princess was trying to help them.

At last however, they did reach the dimmer places underneath the flowers, along the border; and then both Aea and Her Highness Dulcinea came to rest beside them, sighing and trembling.

"Oh, what you escaped!" cried the Princess, "I never want to be so frightened as that again as long as I live! Why in the world did you go out alone? And why in the world can't you learn to keep under the cover of the plants and grasses? Shall I *never* be able to make you remember these few simple rules and precautions?"

"Oh, Princess—if you please, we were under the cover," said Billy, "but a terrible dragon came up on the top and looked over at us and frightened us so we ran away. That's how we got out of the shadows, for we ran as hard as we could—but I can't run very fast, you know, and they had to go slowly for me; and Betty and 'Patkin aren't to blame, for they didn't forget. Only we were afraid of the dragon!"

"Well, well!" said the Princess, looking at Aea.

And Aea, looking back at the Princess, repeated it—"Well, well."

"Well, of course, child," went on the Princess, "I can see how it would be. And I must not scold. Indeed, I did not mean to; but it gave me such a turn when I saw it coming down toward you!—*Oh!*"

"Saw the dragon coming, Princess? But we could run faster than it," said Betty reassuringly.

The Princess shivered and began to tremble again. "Ah no, child," said she mysteriously, "not the dragon. But it was *on the dragon,* thank fortune, that the shadow fell."

"What shadow?" asked Betty.

"Didn't you see a shadow?" asked the Princess.

"No, Princess—I didn't see anything; but the wind blew so hard that it blew me right down—so I wasn't looking."

"I thought I caught sight of something," said 'Patkin, "but just then over I went, too."

"Well, there was the shadow," said the Princess, "and it came in the wind that blew you over. And I suppose I may as well tell you about it, though I was not going to because I thought there was no need of frightening you with bug-a-boos. Look here!" She circled around above the Violet, and pointed to the leaf they had been sitting under—the one from which the dragon had cut such a nice juicy slice—"Do you see," said she, "that the dragon as you call him, is not here?"

Sure enough, he was not. There was not a sign of him, except the hole which he had bitten in the poor leaf. And he was nowhere around, so far as they could see.

"Where's he gone?" asked Billy; and "I didn't think he could run so fast," said Betty, very much surprised.

"No more could he," answered Her Highness, "and it was not of himself that he went away, you may be sure. And no one knows where he has gone—no, sir! *No one!*"

"Not even you?" asked Billy.

"Not even I," answered the Princess Dulcinea; then she dropped nearer. "Listen, children," said she very cautiously, "no one knows—but—it was the *shadow!*"

"The shadow!"

"The one we *didn't* see, Princess?"

"S—sh!—Yes, the one you didn't see."

"But how could a shadow have anything to do with it?" asked Betty, "I don't understand that, Princess."

"No one does," answered the Princess, "that is what I am trying to tell you. But there is a shadow—a danger that hangs over us all, always. And this is what we saw, the lady Aea and I, as we came along—this shadow growing larger as it came nearer so swiftly, aimed straight for you! Oh, it was awful indeed! We tried to make you hear, and tried and *tried;* but you did not. And how we hurried! As fast as our wings would bear us, we came—but we were oh, so far! And it came faster!"

"Oh, yes," said the lady Aea, "faster and faster, and faster too, it came! And then there was the whirr and rush we have seen so many times, and the great black mass!—and *then* we were afraid to look, we were so sure one of you anyway would not be there where we had just seen you! Is it any wonder we were terrified? Or that we trembled? Or that Her Highness scolded you? Oh!—it makes me quite faint and weak now, even to think of it."

They all felt pretty weak and faint at hearing it, and trembly too, you may be sure. And it was some time before Betty ventured to ask, timidly, "if you please, Princess, what—what—*is* it?"

The Princess buzzed her wings and wrung her fore feet together. "Who knows," said she, "who knows? Some say it is a Silver Tongue; others say it is a Cackle. As for myself, I do not pretend to name it. I only know it comes, like many other things that are good instead of evil, from on high."

"But oh, Your Serene Highness," said a modest little voice from near the ground, "this is not evil surely! This is good! Has it not saved me to-day, who am so powerless to save myself, from being eaten alive?"

Of course it was none other than Violet herself who spoke; and with her fresh wound before them not one could deny her claim. "What's more, it's not the first time," she went on, "for these hideous dragons of the Caterpile are ever feeding on me and on my kind—some of them, at least. But every time, so far, I have been rescued happily, in just this same wonderful and mysterious way—just as I have been in despair, too. And it is the same with many of my sisters here."

"And indeed yours is not the only story that may be told," said another voice, not as gentle as Violet's but good and kindly. They looked all around to discover at last that it was a ruddy Tomato, over beyond the flower border, who was adding his testimony. "Again and again have I been the victim of the great, fat gluttonous devourers—and again and again have I been set free of

their evil jaws by this darting streak of night that never fails to strike them. So it cannot indeed be an evil thing, albeit the good sometimes suffer by it."

"I'll just bet it *is* a bird," said Betty after thinking a moment, "for they eat tomato worms—and other worms, too."

"There! That's what it was—*worm*—that I scented," cried 'Patkin, "when you thought it was silly for me to bark while we were eating the bread. That's just what it was, of course—*worm!* Only I couldn't think of the name of it; and I didn't know where it was."

"Well, if the shadow is a Silver Tongue," said Tomato, "all I have to say is this—there wouldn't be anything at all growing on this earth if it were not for them!"

"Why, how is that?" inquired the Princess, somewhat severely.

"Very simple, Your Highness. The greedy Caterpile would eat us all up, every one, and very soon; then you wouldn't have any of our flowers to gather honey from —and that would be the end of you; and sheep and cows wouldn't have anything to eat, and that would be the end of them. And when they were all gone, the people wouldn't have anything to eat—and that would be the end of *them!* So every living thing would starve and die miserably, one after another. I tell you it's lucky

for us and for everything else that there are such things as Silver Tongues—and even Cackles, though they don't do as much. But every little helps, when there are such crowds of robbers and assassins to be held back."

Libellula came floating down just then, looking for his charges and very much disturbed at finding them gone without him. And Tomato appealed directly to him, asking him if what he had just said were not true—for the Princess and lady Aea were really a bit sulky about it. It did not seem to them that a rough creature like Tomato should presume to dispose of the whole earthful with such an air of finality.

But Libellula agreed with him, after the conversation was explained. And so they at last came to understand the great good and benefit the Silver Tongues are to all the world, even though they are to be dreaded by many of the little creatures who do no harm. "I suppose it's like the rain," suggested Betty, "that falls on the just and the unjust. They fall on the just and the unjust too—but prob'ly oftenest on the unjust, don't you think?"

"Probably," said 'Patkin, to whom she spoke particularly. But he answered absent-mindedly—and as they climbed into their places between Libellula's wings, he said, "Listen to this. I think I shall call it 'Allies.'" And then he went on and recited.

"ALLIES"

"A bird is just a pretty bird,
Above our heads its song is heard—
Sweet, sweet, sweet—
Hardly any one ever suspects,
The good it does as it eats insects!

"Each hungry nestling in the trees,
Devours an awful lot of these!
Worms, worms, worms!—
And when they're grown up, they must supply,
Food to their bird-children, by-and-bye.

"A toad is just a humble toad,
Hopping along the dusty road,
Hop, hop, hop—
But if these queer knights were not around,
Cutworms and such things would cover the ground!

"Insects, too, are nothing but that,
No matter where their habitat,
Earth, air, water—
But amongst them all some are benign,
Because on the harmful ones they dine.

"How many things there seem to be,
To give their help to you and me;
Friends, friends, friends—
Ugly, beautiful, great and small,
What *should* we do without them all?"

"That's very nice, I think," said Betty, "and I'm so glad you put in that about Sir Bufo. We must never forget about him—never!—for lots of the things that do

the most harm would never be caught at all, if it weren't for him."

"And yet he might eat us up, if it happened that way and we were not careful," said 'Patkin, "really I guess it's pretty hard to find anything that is good for something that isn't bad for something else."

"Like me," said Libellula, and chuckled, "I'm good for you—but I'm awful for the mosquitos!" And he dropped the dry shell of one that he had just finished and caught another, with one and the same movement, looking very mischievous about it as his great wings beat the air and bore them faster and faster and higher and higher—and away.

Chapter · VII ·

THE CASKETS OF ENCHANTMENT

"Heigh-o!—and well-a-day!
Some love work and some love play."

"I bind in the new moon's ray,"
"And I the blue of sky by day;"

"We hold fast the starlight bright,"
"And we distil the mists of night;"

"We catch the clouds all fleecy white;"
"Each one works with all his might,"

"To fit and—join—and—"

BUT into the soft breeze the chorus faded away, leaving Betty and Billy and 'Patkin looking all around everywhere, from Libellula's back, to see whence it came. "Oh, let's go down over there," cried Billy, who loved music, "it's right down over there, I think."

"I don't," said 'Patkin, "it sounds over there, to me."

"Oh, no," said Betty, "it sounds over *there,*" and in her turn she pointed in the direction it had seemed to her to be.

Libellula laughed at them. "You're all of you right," said he, "for it's all over the garden—here, there and everywhere."

"Who is it?" asked Betty.

"Oh, the green workers, packing their chests."

"What are they packing? And who are they?"

"You heard them singing about what they are packing—and they are—why, they are just the green workers."

"But where are the chests? I don't see any," said Billy.

"Oh, you can't see them. They're kept out of sight."

"Dear me," cried Betty, "it's another mystery! Tell us, please, dear Libellula. What do you mean?"

"Just what I have said," answered Libellula in a very provoking fashion.

"Well, can't we go and *see?*" she persisted.

"You can go down there if you want to," he answered, "but you can't see anything."

"Why not?"

"Because no one ever did or ever can. I'll take you down, and prove it to you."

So down they went swiftly but lightly, as Libellula always flew, until they were almost on the ground. Then he skimmed about until he came to a great clump of something—what, they could not tell. For like most everything else it was so large that they could only see a portion of it at once, with their tiny human eyes, in their tiny form. This indeed was one of the things that bothered them more than anything else here—not being able to see but a little bit of anything, and so not being able to tell what a thing looked like all over. Unless you can tell what a thing looks like all over, you know it is pretty hard to be sure what it is. If you don't believe this, try shutting your eyes almost up and then go quite close to something; and even if you know all about it, it will be pretty sure to look strange to you—so strange that if you did not know what it was, it might be pretty hard to guess.

Of course every one that they had met here had such wonderful great eyes, that this never bothered them. Some indeed had two kinds of eyes! And all of them, friends and foes alike, could look in ever so many directions at once, and take in the whole of any object, no matter how many times bigger than themselves it was.

Sometimes indeed Betty had found herself almost envying these strange beings both their eyes and their legs; but then the thought would come to her that they cer-

tainly needed them both to get along in a world so full of perils and struggles as their world was. Her own two eyes and her arms and hands and wonderful fingers, with which she could do almost anything that she wished, served her quite as well, when she was at home. After all, it depended a good deal on where one was when they were at home—whether in this lowly, close-to-the-ground part of the world, or in the world as we know it, and as they had always known it until this adventure befell them.

Her thoughts were interrupted by Libellula speaking. "Perhaps if you get down and walk about here, you may be able to hear more—even if you don't see anything," he was saying. So he settled on to the ground and tilted his wings and let them step off; and then he hovered just above their heads to guard them, swinging lazily to and fro.

There were many big, green clumps that they did not recognize, scattered about irregularly. Presently they heard some one say, "*Oh*—h! Isn't this sky color just *perfect* to-day? I must get a lot of it before it changes."

"And I must catch a lot of those fleecy little cloudlets," said some one else, "don't often find them just that bright, gleamy white!"

"How about last night's mist? Coming along all right?" asked a third.

"We've enough for to-day; but it 's so very sweet now, we can't have too much—so we must look alive to-night," said still another.

"How are they getting along in the row over there?" It was the first speaker again.

"Not as fast as they ought, I think; but they get only half their due of sunlight. So of course they can't do as well as we—poor things."

"Why, they're Daffodils!" cried Betty and 'Patkin, making the discovery at one and the same time, "see! These are Daffy-down-dillys, Billy. What *is* it they are doing?"

"Well, what do you suppose we are doing?" said the one nearest to her, "can't you see?"

She shook her head. "No, I cannot, Miss Daffodil," said she, "but I'd love to know. Won't you tell me?"

"Why, surely," said Miss Daffodil, with a roguish look at her neighbor, "we're doing our packing."

"But what are you packing?" asked Billy, looking about to see.

"The caskets," answered she, with another look.

"*What* caskets, if you please?"

"Why, the caskets of enchantment, of course—silly little boy!"

"But where are they? I don't see any, anywhere."

The Daffodils all laughed—for they are very jolly you

know, and full of mischief. Then one of them said, "They are hidden."

"And are you going away?" asked Betty, thinking it better manners not to urge them, if they did not want to answer her brother's question.

"No—but we're packing just the same."

Really, it was very trying; and Betty could have jumped up and down with curiosity and impatience. But she held on to herself very tightly, and made up her mind that she would not let them tease her. And in a minute the Daffodil went on, "And everything has to be folded so carefully and neatly! *My!*—you've no idea what skill and care it takes."

"But I don't see anything to be packed, nor anything to pack in," said Betty, resolutely. She was not going to be fooled into believing anything at all that they chose to tell her!

"Of course you can't, my dear," the Daffodils were all laughing again, "no one ever sees it till afterward—long, *long* afterward. But *then—!*"

"But *then—!*" echoed all of them, in their merry voices.

"Why," demanded 'Patkin who had not spoken before but felt that it was time to help his little friend out, "do you pack nothing into nothing if you are not going away?"

This they thought was a great joke, and laughed and laughed, rustling their leaves together and bending this way and that. Betty noticed that some of the leaves were brownish, instead of the clear green of the others —brownish and dry it seemed, at their tops especially.

"Just because we're *not,*" said one at last, breathless from laughter, "that's the reason we do it; but it's not nothing into nothing, you saucy fellow. If there is anything less like nothing than this cloudlet fabric, for instance, I'd like to have you tell me where! And fancy tucking in every little edge, and turning under every tiny puff, and pressing it all down so that it can come out again as smooth as a maiden's cheek! The idea of your suggesting it was nothing into nothing! The *very idea!*"

She sounded so very much offended that 'Patkin made haste to apologize. "But I really think it most mystifying, just the same," said he.

"Well, if you must know," cried a bigger one than all the others, "after we get through packing, we creep in ourselves and go to sleep! Does that make it any clearer?"

Of course it did not; it made it all the more difficult to understand—and really, the Daffodils knew that it would, most likely. They are such jokers!

Betty was nearly wild. "Oh, if you'd please be

serious," she cried, "I didn't know flowers could tantalize any one so!"

"Well, well, well!" said several of them in tones of surprise and new interest, "of course if you really want to know, little girl—"

"Oh, of *course* I want to know," she entreated, "we all want to. For we love the flowers—and I'm going on a mission when I get home, to rescue all of them in the world and all the trees and everything from the wicked brigands and buccaneers and t—torments! And I don't think it's very nice of you to try and tease us!"

"Well, well, *well,*" said they all again.

Then the large one laughed in her breezy fashion and said, "Don't you mind, little Betty. We have to have a little fun, now and then. And we didn't know you really wanted to know; for there are a great many people in the world who try to find out things without really wanting to know them—or really caring anything about them. But now you shall hear all about it—if you'll all promise me one thing."

"Of course we will," cried the three of them, "we'll promise whatever you tell us, dear Miss Daffodil."

"Well, I shall not ask you to promise anything that you ought not to promise," said she, "you are a little rash you know, in saying you'll promise anything until

you know what it is. Be careful about that in future. It might get you into trouble."

"Yes, Miss Daffodil," they answered, one after the other.

"Very well. Now, the thing you must promise me is this—that no matter how surprised you are at them, nor how common you may think they look, you will not despise these caskets which we pack with such precious things, nor allow any one else ever to treat them lightly or with contempt."

"We promise," said they in concert, "never to despise these caskets, nor to allow any one to treat them with contempt."

"Good! And now you must promise me that you will always handle them very carefully and gently, if any are ever put into your keeping, no matter how grubby they seem—remembering how precious and rare their contents are."

"We promise," said they again, wondering more and more.

"Good!" said she again. Then she waited a moment before she went on, as if she were thinking of the best way to begin. "You see," said she at last, "they are very carefully locked, after the workers have packed them and we have crept into them and gone fast asleep; and it doesn't make any difference how much you know

about them, nor how much I tell you of the secret here and now, you *cannot* unlock them yourselves—and no one else ever can, either."

"But who does unlock them, then?" asked Billy.

"No one," said the Daffodil, shaking her head, "that you ever saw or ever will see. No one in all this wide world *can* unlock them; but you can help to do it."

"How?"

"Listen carefully; that's what I am going to tell you now. The only way to unlock one and open it is to put it away off out of sight where nobody can see it—not even yourself—nor take the *least peep* at it; and to leave it there and not touch it again, nor try to open it!"

"Good—gracious!" whispered 'Patkin, "how can anybody unlock anything by not trying to unlock it?"

"That's the only way to do with these caskets, though," insisted Daffodil; and then turning to her neighbors, she said, "Isn't it?"

"It is indeed," answered each and every one of them, "the only way."

"But I don't see—" he began again.

"That's just it; and you're *not* to see," laughed she, "that's what I am trying to impress upon you."

"'Patkin, dear, *please* don't interrupt her," said Betty, "wait till she's finished telling about it."

"Of course," went on the Daffy, "there's only one

place in the world really, where you can be sure of hiding anything as securely as these must be hidden. And of course you can guess that that is right down in the ground. That is all there is to it! You help to unlock the caskets by putting them down into the ground, and leaving them alone!"

"But that isn't unlocking them at all," cried Billy, "where is the key? How *can* they get unlocked way down in the dark?"

"That's for the Sun and the Wind and the Rain to tell you—not I," she shook her leaves and sighed a little sigh, "you are a very curious little boy. But remember it takes something more than curiosity to learn—really to learn—about anything."

"But you have not told us! And you said you would—" he began; but she interrupted him again.

"Oh, yes, I have," said she, laughing, "I've told you *all* about it."

"Why, Miss Daffodil! How can you say that? You didn't tell us what really happens at all. *What happens?*"

Again she laughed. "Why, the caskets open," said she, "if you are careful to do just exactly as I have said; and we wake up, and will come right up out of them, wearing all these lovely things we have packed away—robes of the blue of the sky, and the white of the clouds,

and the gold of the sun, and the silver of the moon, and the brightness of the stars—and all fragrant with the perfume of the night mists!"

"Oh, Miss Daffy-down-dilly," cried Betty with a sudden delighted little squeal, "they're the bulbs! They're the *bulbs,* aren't they?"

"Why to be sure," said Daffy, "that's what they are. Now, how in the *world* did you guess?"

"Oh, Miss Daffodil," cried Betty again, beginning to understand what mischievous things these flowers were, "I'm so glad you told us that way. It was lots of fun!"

"Well, now you can run along and leave us to finish," said Miss Daffodil, smiling at her, "for we have no time to waste."

"But I don't quite understand yet who—that is, how you pack 'em," said Betty, after a moment, "are the flowers all down there in them, now?"

"And could we see them," asked her brother, "if we peeked in?"

"If you knew where to look, maybe you could," answered Miss Daffy, "unless you happened to look into one that was not well packed."

"But why aren't they always well packed?" asked Betty, rather shocked at the thought that there were any shirkers.

"Because the work is interrupted, sometimes—that's

one reason—and sometimes there are little caskets, just growing, that don't hold enough."

"It's mostly that we're interrupted—we don't get a chance to finish," spoke up a Crocus that lived next door to her, "as I didn't, this summer—for all my leaves were cut away. And now I shall have no flowers to show, when the next spring comes around!"

He spoke rather sadly, and at once they felt very sorry for him. "How did it happen?" asked 'Patkin sympathetically.

"I don't know," answered the Crocus, "but I suppose it was because old Simon was not here to watch out."

"Who took them?" asked Billy.

"I don't know; some one who did not know what they were, I suppose."

"What they were?" repeated Betty; "why, every one knows leaves, don't they?"

"A-ha," answered the Crocus, "every one may know *leaves*—yes. But I can't believe that every one knows what a leaf is to me—or to my friends and neighbors there, the Daffodils and the Hyacinths and the Tulips and all of us that store our flowers and ourselves away in our caskets."

Betty was very curious; but she wondered whether she ought to ask any more questions or not. While she was wondering, Mr. Crocus went on, without waiting to be

asked. "It's just too discouraging," said he with a sigh, "to try to do anything in the face of such ignorance! Here am I, perfectly helpless without my workers—my leaves, I mean. I can't even grow any more!—not this year, at least. Yet I expect they will blame me, and say, 'That Crocus bulb couldn't have been any good. It hasn't bloomed but just once.' When it's their own fault!"

"Well, it's a shame," said Betty, "but perhaps if you could explain to me a little more I could tell them about it when I get home."

"Oh, I doubt it," said he, sighing again; he was very much discouraged, there was no mistaking that, and everything looked pretty gloomy to him. But Betty said "Oh!" in such a sorrowful and such a winning little way that he chirked up a bit, and glanced at her with some hope. "You don't suppose you could, really?" he asked, after a moment.

"Well, I'd *try,*" she answered, with very sweet earnestness.

"That's very good of you," answered he, though still gloomy, "I must say that's very good of you. But I'm afraid it won't do me any good!" Here he stopped and sighed two or three times. Then he resumed. "However, it's simply this—leaves are so much to us because they do all our work, you see. They gather the ma-

terials, and make the flowers, and pack them into the caskets; and then after we've crept in ourselves to sleep till spring comes again, they fasten these up snug and close. And if they are taken away from us—if we're robbed of them!—there is no one else can do all this. And there's nothing can do it! So it cannot be done! That's all."

"Don't the flowers ever work?"

"Mercy, no—that is, not in that way. They have special work of their own to do—making seeds is their job—and a very wonderful work it is, too. But the leaves must do theirs first. Flowers can't do anything unless the leaves are there to do their part. Neither can the roots do what they have to; *nothing* can do its part without our dear faithful green leaves—and mine, alas, were stolen from me!"

"I wonder if some one wanted them to work for them," suggested 'Patkin.

"No," said the Crocus, "that isn't likely, I don't believe. But they didn't know any better, I suppose! They thought after I had given them my feast of blossoms and had no more to give, they could get along without seeing me at all; so they just snipped them away, never caring how I felt about it—or what I needed!"

He sighed again, and then was silent, brooding over the injustice, maybe. And Betty looked around

thoughtfully, at the many kinds of leaves all about—above them and on every side. Working, working, *working*—all of them working—silently, most of the time; always silently, so far as she had ever known until she came here, where they could be understood and could understand. And constantly, without ever growing weary or wanting to do anything else, they work; and secretly too, so that no one ever would suspect it. Indeed do they not make less fuss about themselves than anything else that grows, and do less to make folks look at them and remember they are there?

"Goodness," said she at last, "I never thought of such a thing! I didn't s'pose that anything about plants ever *worked.*"

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed a Daffodil, "he—he! What on earth did you suppose we were doing? How did you suppose we grew? And how did you think flowers got themselves made, if we didn't work and make them? Or fruits? *Work?* Well, I should say so! All of the time we work—only we like it and just can't help doing it; so we're different from people—or from some people—you see."

"Hooray! I'm ready," cried some one from well down the line, "every last bit tucked in and folded down—and my casket ready to shut up tight and lock! And if I do say it myself, I've got a cargo aboard this fall that will

make them open their eyes when I fetch it out in the spring—after Sun and Wind and Rain wake me up. But I'm tired now—and I think I've earned my rest."

It was a very yellow looking and straggly Daffodil that was talking, and Betty said to her brother, "Those leaves look all dried up. I guess that poor Daffodil wants a drink."

He overheard her. "No—no drink again this year," said he laughing once more, though not very heartily—he *was* tired, and no mistake—"not another thing to eat or drink this fall! And I'll be sound asleep by morning, or I miss my guess."

"Well, I may as well go to sleep too," said the sad voiced little Crocus, "I can't do anything staying here, with no workers to help me. Really, if this happens to me again, I don't believe I'll try to come back in the spring! It's too discouraging—and what's the use? I don't want to live if I can't bloom."

"Oh, please don't say that," cried Betty, almost ready to cry for sympathy at his sad voice and the trouble he was in, "please come back next spring—and 'Patkin will tell his dear Lady and it will never happen to you again, I am sure. Don't go to sleep without cheering up a little, please, Mr. Crocus! It's dreadful! It makes us all so unhappy and sad for you."

"Well, well," said he, "that's very kind of you, I'm

sure—to take an interest. And I will come back this next year, surely; but honestly I don't believe I *could* live through it, if they robbed me again—even if I wanted to ever so much. It takes the heart out of a fellow so!"

"I had it happen to me once," said a big and sturdy Daffodil, "and I know just how he feels. Some one snipped every worker away just about the time they snipped off the grasses for the first time; and, of course, there was an end of me for two years! But I pushed up again when I was wakened in the spring, for all the world as if I had had every chance to do my packing and flower making—and for some reason I was let alone that year, and had all the time I wanted to get all my work done. And I just made up for lost time, I can tell you. Packed my kit so full of the moonlight and sunlight and starlight gold that it was all I could do to get it closed and fastened—and so when the next spring came around, I just dazzled everybody with it! And I've been very popular since that, if I do say it as shouldn't."

"It's a great pity," said a very seedy looking Hyacinth that had not spoken before, "it certainly is a great pity, and most unfortunate, that there is such a general idea of keeping everything so spick and span everywhere

about. I tell you a fellow's entitled to some time to himself—some chance to get into rags and tatters—if he's going to be himself at all. Can't be on parade *all* the time!"

"That's just it," said the Crocus, "that's just what was the matter in my case, I'm sure. My blossoms had gone, and I wasn't much to look at—but I was busy as I could be, making the ones for next year. Along came somebody though who said 'This isn't very tidy—and no flowers here either. Let's cut away these Crocus' tops and plant something over them,' and that's what they did. And where am I? Out of it for two years—that's where *I* am!"

"Well, we can't help it," sighed Hyacinth, "but it's pretty hard to be blamed for it, when you're not to blame. 'Plague take those hyacinths,' I heard them say —just the other day, 'why can't they behave themselves? One year they blossom and the next they don't—and you never can tell what they're going to do!' Of course I shouted the reason why at them, at the top of my voice. 'Leave us our leaves till they go of themselves,' I yelled, 'then we'll show you!' But the stupids paid no attention —and were half way down to the end of the walk when I finished. So I had all my shouting for nothing."

"Oh, dear!" sighed another. "Humans are peculiar!"

"*Aren't* they, though?"

"And eccentric!"

"And unreasoning!"

"And they *think* they know so much!"

"*Don't* they, though?"

Betty was aghast at this; but after all, from the plants' point of view, she wondered if it were not righteous judgment. Here were these bulbs, for instance; they had been planted there by some one who wanted to see their flowers, every spring. And yet this same some one, perhaps, took away from them over and over again the only means they had of making flowers—and then scolded because they made none. No wonder they thought humans very peculiar. Of course it was because they did not know any better; but why didn't they know better? That was the question. "Oh, dear," said she, "I wish you could have Alec take care of you, Mr. Crocus and Misses Daffodil and Mr. Hyacinth. He wouldn't be so ec-ec-centric—would he?" and she appealed to her brother and to 'Patkin, eagerly.

"Course he wouldn't," said Billy. And "Certainly *not!*" replied 'Patkin, very decidedly. "Old Simon was not stupid, either; I think you forget yourselves—and him—when you say such things about humans generally."

"Well of course," began the seedy looking Hyacinth,

"of course some of them are different. Some of them —ah—ow—wow—are—are—" but he had begun to yawn, and though he got through the first time without stopping his speech, this second one was too much for him. "Oh, never mind *what* they are," said he after he finished it, "who cares? I'm dead to the world—and so good-winter, friends and neighbors. *I'm* going to sleep."

"Good-winter," cried this one and that one, "good-winter to you, neighbor Hyacinth. Pleasant dreams! See you in the spring."

"Yes—in the spring," replied Hyacinth in a drowsy voice; and the wisps of his leaves rattled in the breeze so that 'Patkin remarked that he certainly was all dried up.

"Yes," said the biggest Daffodil, "when their work is done our workers go away, you see—or dry up, which is the same thing, really. For instead of being green leaves they are just brown husks of leaves then; so if you want to know when the work is all done, watch *them.* That's all! They'll tell you by their looks so plainly that they won't need to speak."

"And can't the old dead leaves be cut off?" asked Betty, who disliked to see things untidy, and yet was thinking of the Hyacinth's complaint about people who wanted the garden too spick and span.

"Surely they can—*after* they are old and brown

and dead," replied Daffodil, "they're no more use to us then than worn out clothes to you. The trouble is that you don't wait until then, though. You are forever stealing them from us when they are green and living."

"Brown and dead, brown and dead, green and living, green and living," came whisperings from here and there—whisperings that began to take on a little sing-song and to grow louder, until, with the Daffodils leading them, all the bulbs burst forth into a part-song.

CHORAL

"It's plainly to be seen,
Whilst living leaves and green
With us abide, with us abide,
The time is not yet here
For cleaning up,—not near!—
And if it's tried, oh, woe betide!

"Not till they're brown and dead
Have all our workers fled,
Their task complete, their task complete;
Then is done their duty,
Ready is the beauty
With which we'll greet, new springtime sweet.

"But we can't spare a one,
Before this work is done,—
Please remember, *please* remember!
And though some mature early,
Some bulbs aren't ripe—thor'ly,—
Till September, late September."

THE SLEEPING LEGIONS AND THE MAGIC DUST

THEY were just about to climb up to Libellula's back and resume their ride when along came the Princess Dulcinea in the greatest state of excitement you could imagine. "Oh," she cried breathlessly, "oh, the strangest thing has happened that has *ever* happened, I am sure! Really, I don't know what to make of it!"

"Do tell," said Libellula, with a look of mild interest, keeping one section of his eye on the children as they walked up his wing.

"Well, indeed I will tell—and you must explain it, if you can. Of course *nobody* can; but you must try."

"I'll do my best," he answered, rather drily.

She sounded her call; and then she sat on a lily flower and told her tale, as the clan assembled.

"Of course," said she, "I started out as usual this morning, at the usual time; and I came, as I knew that I should, to the space above the amethyst and sapphire fountains, just at the moment when the Sun peered up over the rim of day. And there I floated in the bath of pure light for a bit—but really the scents which rose to me were so delicious that I could not long resist them, even for this pleasure. So I lowered myself lightly, as I love to do, until I stood on the threshold of one of the greatest and loveliest of the fountains—a wonderful blossom indeed, you may believe. And almost the moment my feet touched it, the keeper's voice spoke to me, from beyond—as the keepers always speak. 'Oh, fair Princess Dulcinea,' he called out to me, 'will you test my basin's brimming sweetness? Welcome, then, within this azure tinted shelter and pray you, tarry and rest awhile'—just the way they always talk, you know. Of course I was not in need of rest, and told him so—"

"You had but just started," said Libellula, with a little laugh, "what could he have thought?"

"I don't know," said the Princess, "but that's what he *said.* Of course I answered that I was not in need of rest; whereupon he replied, 'But this is a lovely spot;

tarry awhile, Princess, and see its beauties.' Now, of course you all know that these *are* lovely spots—these fountains; and as I've just told you, this was a rarely lovely one, large and finer than you often find. And so of course, wishing to be polite, and admiring it sincerely too, I said that it was indeed lovely—and examined it; and really, *such* workmanship! And such cunning in the art of color—and of construction! Such a deep, cool basin! Oh, it was like a dream!—and I remarked as much. And *then* what do you think he said?"

"Oh, tell us," cried every one.

"Why, that this fountain's beauty was beyond purchase and beyond price, truly—still, beautiful as it was, this azure tinted basin was only the beginning—a preparation. Which of course we've all heard—or something like it, somewhere, sometime. And I told him so, adding however that I myself had never been able to see that anything special came afterwards. To this he answered, 'No—you could not see, for it's done in secret; and these walls fade into ruin; and nothing remains to interest you, oh fair daughter of beauty and sweetness, Princess of the Apis!' Now, *what* do you think about that?"

There was a great clamor—as every one tried to tell what they thought about it—in answer to her question. But she did not want them to answer, it seemed, after

all; for she had more to tell. And so she made the royal signal for silence, and gradually it grew quiet once more.

"I just gasped at that, you may be sure," she went on, " 'what,' said I, 'these walls? Fall into *ruin?*' My dears, it was awful to think of! Inlays of amethyst and coral on sapphire, and clear sapphire—and glints of topaz and emerald here and there, and mother of pearl—all blending and mingling! It was unthinkable! 'Why,' said I, 'what misfortune befalls? What happens? What *do* you mean?' And his answer only made it worse and worse. 'No misfortune, Princess,' said he, as calmly as I am saying it now this minute—or more so—'no misfortune'—just like that. You can imagine that I was all a-quiver with excitement by that time—for plainly I was about to learn of something entirely new and strange. So I bade him explain. But he only responded by saying, 'Come inside, Princess.' "

"And you did?" asked Betty.

"Indeed I did, as fast as I could! Went in, and right up to the side of the nectar basin before he spoke again. Then he said very softly and as if he were actually telling the great secret, 'Yonder, Princess Dulcinea, beneath this basin, hidden deep away, lies a secret chamber'—and then he stopped and waited so long I thought I should die of impatience. 'And in this secret chamber,' said he

at last, 'there sleeps—' and there he stopped again, and I could have screamed! But I only said, 'Yes, yes! There sleeps—go on, good keeper, *go on!*' And *then* what do you suppose he said?"

"Oh, what? *What* did he say then?" gasped every one.

"Why, he said, very slowly and in a deep whisper, 'There sleeps that which no eyes can see and no hands can touch, and which nothing is too small even as nothing is great enough, to contain!' "

"What *did* he mean?" cried several from here and there. Even Libellula looked very much interested and puzzled.

"That's just it. What *did* he mean?"

"Oh, didn't he tell you, Princess?" cried Betty, breathlessly.

"No, he did not," answered the Princess with much agitation, "the only answer he would make to my questions was, 'Guess my riddle and you shall know.' And not another thing could I get out of him, except just 'yes'es' and 'no's.' Was there a key to this secret chamber? I asked him. 'Yes.' Had he it? 'No!' Where was it? He did not know. Where was the door? *There was none!* Would they-who-slept-therein always sleep? 'No!' Would they-who-slept-therein ever come forth? 'Yes!' *When?* 'In the fulness of

time.' When would *that* be? He 'knew not!' And so on, until I was nigh to distraction, I assure you—and weary beyond words. So at last I turned to refresh me at the basin of this fountain, my mind made up to ask him nothing more! And then I walked lightly, as is my habit, back to the fountain's entrance over the azure-violet pavement, and at once started to take wing. But *what* do you suppose he said to me *then?*"

From the tone with which she said this, it was certain that she had come to a still more remarkable part of her story than any she had yet told. And of course every one was just that much more excited and wrought up and eager to hear the answer. "Oh, Princess! WHAT?" they cried, in an agitated chorus.

"Why, he thanked me," said the princess slowly and with great emphasis, dwelling on each word so that their wonder as to what the next was going to be grew and grew, "he thanked me; and then he said to me, 'Thrice happy am I, fair Princess Dulcinea, that I have been able to entertain you. For it is you yourself who have brought here, and left, the secret chamber's golden keys!' "

"*Yourself,* Princess!" "How could that be?" "Why, did you have keys with you?" "What did he mean?" These and others like them were the cries from every side that greeted this mysterious speech

which she repeated to them; and the excitement that seized upon every one present was at the boiling point. "What did you say to him," cried some one at last, so loudly that it rang out above all the rest.

"What did I *say* to him?" repeated the Princess, "why, I just fairly shrieked at him, 'What have *I* to do with it? I brought no keys, nor saw none! You must be out of your mind!' And then he laughed at me, and laughed and laughed! 'You *saw* no keys, Princess, 'tis true,' said he, 'but brought them. And even now they've found the lock—if not a door!' "

"Well, what in the world do you make of it?" demanded the twin Princess Dulciana, "what *do* you make of it?"

"What do I make of it?" repeated the Princess Dulcinea, so much agitated over the experience that she trembled until the lily on which she sat bobbed about and waved as if a wind blew it, "what can anybody make of it, I'd like to know? *Nothing!* Just nothing at all! What he was talking about, and what it all means is quite beyond my wits to figure out. And I'm nearly wild about it!"

Everybody fell to guessing and making suggestions; but no one seemed to be satisfied with their own nor any one else's guess, and there was a perfect bedlam of voices for the next few minutes—without any one getting any

nearer the truth of the matter than they were in the beginning.

"Wouldn't you love to see this lovely fountain, Billy?" asked Betty of her brother, as they watched and waited to see what was going to happen and what they all thought about it finally, "I would."

"Oh, do you s'pose we could?" asked Billy eagerly.

"Could we, do you think, dear Libellula?" She put the question to him, because she had no idea herself how to answer it.

"Why, yes," said Libellula, "I guess you can. There's nothing to hinder, that I know of—though I think it might be well to speak to the princess about it first."

It was not an easy matter to reach her side, and to get her to listen, in the midst of such a hub-bub; but they attracted her attention at last, and told her what they wanted to do. And she said, "Well, go ahead if you want to!" almost before the words were out of their mouths, she was that upset and excited. So away they went; and they came almost at once to the place where this particular fountain was.

Of course the children were very surprised when they saw it; for no one—least of all they—would have supposed it was anything but a larkspur blossom, nodding on a tall spike along with many more of its kind. In-

deed, they thought that Libellula must have made a mistake when he said, "There it is! That's it, right there."

"Why, there isn't any fountain here," exclaimed Betty, looking this way and that as he came to a stop on one of the leaves. "You're mistaken, Libellula. We'd see it if there were."

"My dear little girl," said Libellula, laughing pleasantly, "you are not looking for the kind of thing that *people* call a fountain, are you?"

"Why, yes," said she, "isn't that what it is?"

"Now stop a minute and think," said he, "could it be *that* kind of fountain that the Princess Dulcinea visited? You know it could not, when you remember all the circumstances."

"Of course," said Betty, rather taken back, "I forgot where we were—and how small! The Princess couldn't go walking around such a great fountain and into it, very well—sure enough."

"So," said Libellula, "you see there may be a fountain here after all. And of course there *is*—or I wouldn't have brought you here. If you'll dismount and take a look around right in there"—he pointed with one of his fore feet into the blossom, "I'll guarantee that you'll find it's what we are looking for."

They had rather a hard time of it stepping from their

winged friend's back upon the flower in such a way that they would not miss their footing. For flowers, you know, are not made for boys and girls and dogs to walk around upon, even though they are very tiny specimens of boy and girl and dog. 'Patkin did not have as much trouble as the children, however; for of course his four feet were more like the six of the insect world than the two that they had always found sufficient. But even he had plenty of difficulty, for the cushions on his paws were not made to stick to any sort of thing, regardless of whether its owner is right side up, or upside down.

This particular fountain—or larkspur blossom—was in a position that helped them, however; which was lucky, else they never would have been able to climb into it. For it stood well toward the top of the flower spike, and looked up instead of drooping its head as most of the other flowers did. And so its floor—quite as beautiful as the princess Dulcinea had said, with its blendings of turquoise and amethyst and coral—was almost level; and they finally managed to reach the chamber wherein was the basin of which she had spoken with such delight. "Such a deep, cool basin," she had said; and that is just what it was—deep and cool and wondrous, as they peered into it. They saw no keeper though; and Billy was just about asking where they supposed he had gone, when he spoke to them. But

they did not see him then, nor at all afterwards—so don't expect to learn what he looked like.

"Who are you," said he, "that come here, unbidden?"

They looked this way and that, wishing to explain; but seeing no one, they looked at each other, and did not know what to say.

"Who are you," he repeated, "that come here unbidden? Look not for me, for I am never seen by the eyes of any creature. But answer my question as if ye saw me."

"We are a brother and sister from the Orphanage," began Betty, but 'Patkin interrupted her.

"Permit me," said he, and then drew himself up with the dignity that he thought fitting to his position and the position of his little friends. "These are my charges," said he, "visitors from the great world of the Overlords. We come to view the beauties of which we have learned from the Apis Princess, Dulcinea, of the Buzfuz province. And our names are Betty—and Billy—and 'Patkin." He motioned to each of them, and then indicated himself as he spoke his own name.

"Oh—ho," said the keeper's voice, less chilly in its accents at the mention of the Princess Dulcinea, "are you indeed friends of the Princess?"

"We are," replied 'Patkin, "friends of the Princess, and more; we are under her special guardianship, and

travel by the great wings of Libellula, her kinsman, the dragon of the air, the king of all their kingdoms."

"Indeed," said the voice, "then your dispositions are friendly to my charge here. But until I know, I must always doubt and fear; for there are many who travel the ways of the air, who are robbers and enemies so deadly that the life of each and all is menaced by them. I dreaded lest you were some of these—some new and strange enemy, come to torment."

"Of course you'd never know us," said Betty, "I don't blame you a bit. But we wouldn't do any harm for anything! The Princess told us about coming here this morning, and that made us want so much to do so, that she said we might. And oh, it's *so* lovely!"

"You think so?" asked the voice, "well, it's good you came to-day—for to-morrow this will have changed. And perhaps you would like it less—though you should not."

"Will have changed?" repeated 'Patkin in a questioning tone, "in what manner, if I may ask, oh keeper of the flower fountain?"

"The sleepers are stirring," said the keeper, as if that explained everything.

"The sleepers!" whispered Betty—and they looked at each other. Then she took a long breath, and said, "Sleepers, Mr. Keeper?" pretending very hard not to

appear too much interested—only just polite and attentive.

"The sleepers that lie beneath the basin," answered he—just as if *that* explained it!

"Oh," said she, "is some one asleep down—down-stairs?" She was looking at the basin and its sweet contents with eyes that it almost seemed *must* see through and underneath, they were so earnest and eager.

"They were asleep," answered the keeper, "but already they stir, faintly—faintly."

"Did we waken them?" asked Billy.

"No," said the keeper, "you didn't waken them; and no one wakened them. No one *could* waken them; but they waken."

"There's some of that yellow dust," whispered Betty, pointing to a trail of it across the shining pavement, "that's always on the Princess' velvet jerkin. Must be that's where she walked."

It was a *very* soft whisper in which she said this; but like nearly everything they had met here, this keeper of the fountain must have had sharp ears; for he heard it.

"Dust," said he, in a dreamy tone, "golden dust! Marking a bee track, just as you say, little lady—showing where a dear little dusty summer-day pilgrim has trod, making her way to drink of the nectar stored inside. Magic dust—more precious, always remember,

than any other gold in all the world; more precious than anything else in all the world!"

"What, *that?*" cried 'Patkin, sniffing at it.

"Why, that's all over all of the Buzfuzes," said Betty.

"Nobody ever gathers it, 'cepting the bees," said Billy, frankly unbelieving.

"That makes no difference," insisted the keeper, "that does not change its value."

"You couldn't get any money for it, though," said Billy, "could you?"

"I don't know what that is," was the extraordinary answer, "but if it is worth anything, you probably could —only I don't see what would be the use."

"Money! Why, money is worth everything," said Betty, shocked and astonished at such a remark—for Betty knew that money could purchase all sorts of comfortable and beautiful things, "nothing *can* be worth as much as money!"

"Nothing can be worth as much as these grains of golden dust," answered the keeper's voice, in such a positive tone that they were very much impressed, even though they did not see how his words could be true, *"nothing!* For without them there would come an end of all things, and the face of this earth would in short space be bare and brown and withered, with no voices heard anywhere over all of it—silence and no life,

neither of man, nor bird, nor beast, nor any creeping thing!"

Just this strange voice, coming from where they could not tell, and saying such words, made them feel almost as if some one from the Bible were talking to them. And they all three kept very still for a long time after he had finished speaking. "Neither man, nor bird, nor beast, nor any creeping thing!" What could he mean? What could this precious dust be? How they wanted to know—and almost feared to ask. At last however, Betty did speak up.

"I am 'fraid we don't understand you very well, Mr. Keeper," said she, looking into the heart of the flower. It seemed as if he must be down there somewhere, even though she could not see him. "And of course money isn't just like that—though I guess nobody could live very long without it. But birds and animals don't have to have it; at least I never s'posed they did. So I guess it's quite different."

"Oh, I know that gold is valuable, everywhere," answered the keeper, "and so I know there must be different kinds of it. Great creatures like the Overlords could never handle these grains of precious dust which I am here to guard, of course; for one thing, they're too fine—and for another, they're hardly plentiful enough to be gathered by any save the countless Buzfuz

clan and their relations. So I have always been sure there were other kinds."

"Money isn't always gold," said Billy, who had never seen but just one piece that was of the precious metal, "money's most always nickel or—or—." "Brass?" suggested 'Patkin.

"You mean copper," corrected Betty, "that's what pennies are made of, so Mrs. Bell said."

"Perhaps I do," he acknowledged, "I'm not much on such things, you know—for of course I don't use 'em."

"But the nicest money is gold," Billy was trying to remember all that he could about it, "and our mother had a gold locket, and once she had a five dollar gold piece. You remember, Betty?"

Betty remembered, of course. "But that wasn't like this gold, though," she said, as she gathered some of it up in her hand to examine it, "this is like—oh, it's like darling little gold beads, only they feel as if they were made of velvet instead of gold! Velvet or silk—or feathers; oh, *aren't* they soft and lovely?"

She held out her hand for Billy and 'Patkin to see—and Billy looked wonderingly at them while 'Patkin sniffed again and cocked his ears and twisted one forward and the other back. "Oh, dear," she sighed wistfully, "I wonder what it is. It does seem as if it were

the most wonderful stuff there could be in the world!"

All of a sudden 'Patkin sneezed; and then he exclaimed, "Why, to be sure! It's almost exactly like the dust that always gets into my nose and makes me sneeze so, when I run through the fields where the golden-rod is blossoming. My Lady calls it—pol—pollen. Yes, pollen; that's it."

"Why, I do believe he's right," said Betty, studying her handful of the golden grains again, "that's what gives Mrs. Bell hay fever, she says; the golden-rod pollen."

"Well, I should think it might," said 'Patkin, "it's the sneeziest stuff ever I got into. And that's exactly what this is. Take care, or you'll catch it."

"Foolish," cried Betty, "how could these little beads make us sneeze? There's nothing peppery about them."

'Patkin considered, and cautiously sniffed at them once more. "I don't know that there is," said he slowly, "and of course we can hardly sniff them into our noses while we're this size. But just the *smell* of them makes me sneeze—A-chew!"

"Please remember that you are not speaking of the common golden-rod," said the keeper's voice, "these grains you know are not shed by it."

"Oh," said they, all three together. Then Betty, as

usual, pursued the matter further. "How do you know," she asked, "like as not the Princess had some golden-rod pollen on her jacket."

The keeper laughed softly. "Now, it's yourself that is foolish," said he, "but of course I suppose your eyes see no difference between these and other grains of the precious stuff. We know, however—and only the pollen of our own kind can waken the sleepers beneath the fountain basin. No other is admitted."

"Why not?" asked Billy.

"Because," answered the keeper, with such a tone of that-settles-it that not one of them asked another question.

Betty stood running the tiny beads through her fingers and watching them, admiring the lovely shape and exactness of each and the engraving on them for a moment; then she said, "I remember once, Billy, that Alec scolded about the strawberries and the pollen; don't you? He said they didn't bear well, because the pollen wasn't right. I wonder why it wasn't?"

"That I can tell you," said the keeper, "if you care to listen."

"Care to listen," exclaimed 'Patkin, "why, man alive —I mean Mr. What-ever-you-are alive—we're simply crazy for information. Go on and tell us—talk, *talk!*"

The keeper chuckled gently. "Very well," said

he, "then listen—and don't ask foolish questions."

'Patkin gave the children a look of warning, and they looked at each other and at him, and nodded seriously.

"In the first place," began the keeper, "never let any one make you believe that pollen isn't all right, or anything like that. It's not the precious golden grains that are wrong; but something in wind or weather, or planting or care—which latter are the fault of the Overlords, if you'll excuse my mentioning it."

"Certainly," said they.

"And so, though it is all right, it cannot do its part." He paused a moment, but no one dared say a word. Then he said, "But of course you don't know what its part is, do you?"

"No, sir," said 'Patkin, "we do not."

"And you don't know what *it* is, do you?"

"No, sir, we do not."

"Well, neither do I know what it is," was the very unexpected and disappointing answer, "but I do know what it does—and that's almost as good. And I know where it comes from—which is something."

"We know where it comes from, too," said Billy, before his sister could stop him, "it comes out of the flowers."

"Oh—ho—ho," laughed the keeper, not in the least offended as she was afraid he would be, "to be sure it

comes out of the flowers. But whereabouts is it when it's *in* the flowers? Do you know that?"

No one did, of course; and so he told them. "It comes out of the pollen boxes," said he, "where it is made and stored; and the pollen boxes are those little things that look to you like knots, on the ends of those upstanding rods that you probably thought were put before the basin to guard it and make it difficult to go close up to it. That's not what they are for, at all, though!"

As he stopped here, and waited, expecting some sort of reply it seemed, 'Patkin responded with, "That is what they look as if they were for." He had given up trying to get close to it indeed, because of them; he found them so uncertain to walk over.

"Yes, I know they do. But the real reason they are there is to be walked over! Don't you see if you come to drink at the basin, and walk across them, you'll shake the pollen out of the cases and on to yourself, and get it all over you?"

"That's rather unpleasant—to get so dusty," ventured Betty.

"Princess Dulciana and Princess Dulcinea are always dusty," said 'Patkin, "and so are the others. And they don't seem to mind."

"No," said the keeper, "they've always been dusty, I

expect. And so they don't think anything of it; indeed, I've heard that they hold it an honor to have their velvet jerkins studded thickly with these yellow gems—and I can understand that this might be so, knowing their value as I do."

Betty considered them again, wondering if she might not adorn herself with some. But her dress was only gingham, and to gingham they did not seem to want to stick. "I s'pose they're so valuable," said she, "that it's only when anybody wears velvet they can use them."

"Well," the keeper resumed, "when you walk over these pollen cases set up on the ends of the flexible rods that you may call filaments if you will, the pollen gets on to your clothes; and then you go into another fountain chamber and drink from another basin, and some of it will brush off and stay there; and you'll pick up some more there and carry this on to the next—and so on. And that is just what we want; that is exactly why it is all arranged just as it is."

"Oh, why?" gasped Betty, forgetting entirely the injunction laid upon them against asking questions. Instantly she remembered though, and bit her lip. But again she was surprised at the keeper's good nature. He did not reproach her, even by his tone, but answered at once, "Because the grains are golden keys."

Surely this was a mysterious answer, and unless he

told them more it was not going to satisfy their curiosity very much. "Oh," said Betty again, in a disappointed tone, "golden keys?"

"Yes," answered the keeper, "pollen grains are the precious keys to that secret chamber which must be unlocked, else the flower has lived and bloomed in vain. For hark ye," his voice grew suddenly loud and strong and majestic, filling the chamber with its resonance; "hark ye! It is there that the sleeping Seed of Life rests, there that IT lies—waiting, waiting!"

Never in all their lives had they lived through such a breathless moment as this! Somehow they felt certain that the greatest secret in all the world had been confided to them; and they were awed and thrilled and inexpressibly happy over it, though they did not understand! Indeed, they were all a-quiver with the excitement of it, just as the Princess had been when she told of her adventure. "Oh," gasped Betty; and "Oh," gasped Billy; and "Oh," gasped 'Patkin, one after the other. There wasn't anything else to say, really; and there wasn't much sense in saying that, but they had to relieve their feelings somehow.

After a moment however, Billy got his breath back sufficiently to whisper as he looked at the many little pollen cases standing there before them, "Isn't there any pollen in these, Mr. Keeper?"

"Oh, yes," said the keeper, "but I must have pollen from another flower to waken the sleepers that I guard here—instead of this."

"Why?" asked Betty, as easily as any one always says "why"—little dreaming that it was the greatest question in all the world that she was giving voice to!

They heard a little sigh before the unseen keeper spoke again. "You ask it lightly," said he, "how shall I make you understand? Oh, little girl, and little boy—and great dog! Know you all that all the knowledge and all the wisdom of all the wise men and all the sages in the world, has never found an answer to *that!* No one knows why or may know. It is better—that is all!"

"It's another secret," whispered Betty.

"Ah," said the keeper, "deep in the heart of creation there are many secrets locked away. But this is the greatest, verily I believe—the *greatest* secret!"

"And can't you unlock the chamber where the sleepers lie with your own keys?" asked 'Patkin.

"Yes—we can, each of us. But it is better that we should not. They waken to greater things if it is pollen from another flower of our kind, that stirs them."

"But I don't see where there is anything like a key in the grains," said Billy, who was looking carefully at some that he had picked up, "they're just little beads."

"No," said the Keeper, "you *see* nothing like a key.

But in every grain there is that which reaches down and down, oh, so gently and tenderly, until it touches the sleeper that it seeks. And that is all. Then my task is done—and the flower's."

"And then what do you do?" asked Betty, "take a vacation?"

"Yes, my dear," said he, "I take a long vacation. For I have earned it by waiting patiently here in my hiding place, to invite the fair daughters of the Apis clan, or their kindred of the Sparnopolius or some other family —those dainty, wee flies that your kind call, after the Princess and her people, bee-flies—to enter, and to urge them to drink, knowing that one will bring hither just the right pollen to do this amazing thing. And it's quite a task." He sighed, pensively.

"And so at last the Princess brought it" he went on —"or them," he corrected himself, "there are many seeds you know, from every flower—and not a one will stir save it is wakened by a separate grain."

"Oh," said Betty, "then did the Princess Dulcinea bring several this morning?"

"Yes," answered he, "it was the Princess—and she brought many—many."

"But those—those people that are asleep in there haven't come out yet," said Billy, watching the floor of the basin to see if he could see any signs of its giving

way. He had an idea that it must open up with a trap door, through which they would rise.

"Oh, no—they won't come out; not now. They have much to do before they are ready. And when they do come out, you'll never know them—nor dream that they have been waked up."

"Oh, why," cried Betty, "can't we talk to them?"

"Oh, it's very complicated," said the keeper, sighing deeply, "I doubt if I could ever make you understand, as I said before. They wake up, of course—they're awake now this very minute—but they have to grow; and then they have to tuck themselves all up tight into a snug little cradle so that nothing can hurt them when at last they do come out into the rough everyday world. And then—well, then—" He stopped as if he did not know exactly what happened then; and Betty's eyes began to open bigger and bigger.

"A cradle," said she in a breathless kind of way, "did you say a cradle, Mr. Keeper, please?"

"Yes," he answered, "a sort of cradle, I suppose you'd call it; for it holds the baby, you know," here he laughed a little chuckly laugh, "the child of this plant," he added, by way of explanation.

"I knew it," cried Betty, "I just knew it! It is, it *is*—it's a SEED that you're talking about!"

"To be sure," said he calmly, "didn't you know?

Of course it's a seed—from which another plant shall grow, with leaves and flowers and pollen—and the Seed of Life sleeping at its heart, waiting once more for the magic of the golden touch. And again there shall be the awakening, and the growing of more seed; and they shall be planted; and others shall follow them; and others, rising from their offspring—and thus they shall go on, and on, and on! For such is life; so the life of the plants goes on always; and the life of the creatures that live on them; and the life of the world—all because there are pollen grains, more precious than all the gold and jewels that were ever mined—even as I have said!"

"And nobody can make the pollen but the flowers," said Betty, half to herself.

"No one," said the keeper, "and no one can find a bit anywhere but in a flower. So now, what about your money?"

"I guess it isn't much," said Billy, "what good would it be, if the flowers stopped making pollen? You couldn't buy any, anywhere, no matter if you had a billion dollars!"

The keeper laughed softly; and then silence fell upon them, until Betty suddenly felt that they ought to be going.

"Thank you so much," said she, "we shall never

forget how kind you have been, Mr. Keeper. And maybe we can come and see you again to-morrow—I mean, and visit you." She remembered that they had not seen him, and would not.

Again he laughed. "Nay," said he, "don't come *here* again. For see! See how already the walls are growing dim? And the roof, see how that is fading? And the floor beneath your feet, see how that is losing its freshness? Don't come here again; choose another fountain, where the sleepers still are sleeping."

They looked around as his words suggested; and sure enough, it was as he said. Everywhere there were signs of fading. The colors were dimmer, and the glistening interior of this loveliest of spots that they had ever seen, was not as bright. Already ruin, indeed, was overtaking all the marvel of its beauty!

"Oh, Keeper," cried Betty, most unhappy at what she saw, "what has happened? What *has* happened?"

"Haven't I told you?" answered the Keeper a little shortly, "why do you ask me again?"

"Oh, but why can't this lovely flower *stay* lovely?"

"What for," he asked, "what on earth for? What do you suppose is the reason for a flower, my dear, except for the seed? This larkspur has something else to do, let me tell you, now—something much more important than to make pretty blossoms. The messengers of the

air have brought their burdens of what you call the dusty pollen, and left them; the magic of them has reached where the sleepers lie; the sleepers stir and are awake! What is there more, pray?"

"Why, I don't know," said Betty, doubtfully, "only I thought—"

"No, you didn't," interrupted the keeper, "that's just the trouble. You never stopped to think at all, else you would have known that all a flower is for is to make the seed. When the seed is made, be very sure there won't be any more bothering to blossom! No indeed!"

They made their way out of the fast fading blossom and got on to Libellula's back rather sorrowfully, when the keeper said nothing more in answer to their comments and regrets. "I don't care," said Betty, "I think it's a shame!"

But just then they discovered that 'Patkin's Lady was below in the garden, talking to Angelo; so of course they went right down to be near her, and hear what she was saying to him. And when they got close, they found that she too was talking about the flowers fading.

"Isn't it too bad," she was saying, "they fade so soon? But you must pick them all off, Angelo—just as soon as they look the least bit shabby," she was snipping off the heads of some very dilapidated looking Zinnias as she talked, "for if you don't they will not blossom any

more. See? They are really gone to seed, some of them. That will never do! No more blossoms, if we allow that."

"Why they not blossom more?" asked Angelo.

"Because all they want is to make seeds; if we let them, they don't have to go on trying. If we don't let them, they do."

"Oh-ho," said the gardener, "I see. They want-a de own way. When they no hav'a de own way, keep *try* to hav'a him."

"That's it," laughed the Lady, "that's it precisely, Angelo. They keep trying to have it—and so they go on blossoming. Remember though, that we must be good to them, and give them a little extra to eat, when we make them do our way instead of theirs. So bring the bone-meal and dig some in around everything that you cut old flowers from,—for bone-meal is what makes flowers, you know."

Away went Angelo to get the bone-meal; and they swung back and forth lazily, in the sunshine. "And I always thought flowers came just to make us glad," said Betty, after a bit—rather sadly, perhaps.

"Oh, no," laughed Libellula, "nothing is like that in all the world. But that's no reason for not being glad just the same, at sight of them."

"Indeed, no!" said 'Patkin enthusiastically, "it may

be too bad, if you look at it one way; but not if you look at it the other." And then he recited:—

FLOWERS AND SEEDS

"In field and wilderness and sunny dell,
In the waste places of the earth, as well
As in the pleasant gardens men have made,
Fair flowers, and sweet, the happy future tell.

"In each is sanctuary, where, concealed,
Lies that secret which may not be revealed!
Beneath the tender heart of every one,
Resting, it waits there, where it has been sealed.

"It is the secret verily, of Life,
That hides in flowers!—each chalice deep is rife
With the still wonder and the fragrant hush,
From the great deeps which are unplagued by strife.

"And thus a plant may only blossom when
More Life is come, to enter in again
And build more seed, and thus to multiply
That kind;—oh, never think flowers bloom for men!

"Thus the beginning and the end, forsooth,
Of all the beauty is, in very truth,
The seed alone,—the queer, dead, tiny grains!
For these the plant has lived,—as age for youth!"

"'Patkin, I think you're wonderful," said Betty, as he stopped.

"Do you, really," said 'Patkin, trying to look as unconscious as one usually tries to look when some one says that to him—and succeeding about as well.

A FAR LAND AND THE GOING HENCE

"HALT! Who goes there?" It was a very stern voice, and a big loud one, too.

"Only a small company of Zephyrs, sir, traveling for pleasure," came the answer at once.

"How do I know you are traveling for pleasure," said the stern voice, "how do I know you are telling the truth?"

"Why, see how small and sweet we are! We could do no harm if we tried."

"Mm—huh! That may all be; perhaps you could not, alone. But how do I know who is with you—who may come following after? And what a lot of you together might do?"

Betty had run to look from their cavern and see who it was that argued thus in the darkness—or almost darkness—of the early evening; and now she turned to nod her head and whisper, "It *is* General Pine-tree—and he's waving his arms around and wagging his head just awfully! He's very angry about something, I think. But I can't see anybody else."

"We do not know who may come following after us," said the one who was doing the talking among the Zephyrs, as they called themselves, "for the lanes and highways of the air are free, and who wishes may travel there. But our associates are of the gentlest, we do affirm upon our honor; and the land of our birth is a land of warmth and friendship."

"Oh—ho—ho," said the gruff old General, "oh—ho—ho, ha—ha!" and he bent this way and that as he laughed, "of course it is!—and of course I know it, gentle little friends. Otherwise I'd have pulled and torn you all to shreds and pieces a dozen seconds ago!"

Betty saw by the movement of a tall poplar near General Pine-tree that the Zephyrs must all have shrunk back in alarm at that, and taken refuge perhaps in its

top. The General went on after a moment however, in a voice that reassured them.

"But you may all come ahead if you like, without being afraid—gently—gently though!—and not too fast! Not all together either, but by ones and twos, and now and then threes, if you are very discreet about it." He beckoned to one evidently and then to another, showing them the way he wished them to take. "Here—this way for you; and that way for *you*—and you—over there!—and you go through up there. *That's* the way! You see, I just had to have a little fun with you, great travelers that you are. As if I didn't know you right away! There you are now—skeedaddle!"

Which was a little ruffling to their dignity, no doubt; but Betty heard one saying as they swept past and away, "Whew! He *could* have torn us to shreds, just as he said—if he had wanted to." And she ran and climbed back into their cradle and cuddled down into the warmth of the dandelion down, glad that the great and good General stood over them, on guard against the invasion of rougher, ruder winds than these Zephyrs that he had challenged so fiercely.

But even with General Pine-tree standing guard over them, what was to become of them when winter really arrived? The thought of it kept her from going to sleep, and made her quite sick at heart; for how was

she to get warm clothes for Billy? And where were they to get anything to eat? The winds would blow cold, and the snow would come; nowhere would there be a seed or a berry or anything!

All the water would be locked up in ice, and the nectar would be frozen in the flower chalices and—oh, dear! What *were* they going to do? What *was* to become of them? Had they escaped all the monsters and dragons, only to come to their end miserably, starving and freezing? Was there *no* way that this strange visit could be brought to an end? No way they could find back to that part of the world where they belonged, and where they were the size of other little boys and girls?

She thought about it, and prayed about it, and began to cry—softly to herself, be sure, so that she would not waken Billy and 'Patkin; but no answer came. There did not seem to be any chance of their getting back—for they had not the very faintest idea of how they came!

At last she fell asleep, however, and slept till morning came and the friendly Sunbeam peeped over the cradle's side to waken them.

"There's lots doing to-day," said he, "better get out and do your share."

"We'll be there in just a minute," cried all three; and

they hurried so fast that they did not know how cold it had been, and were soon outside where the warm sunlight was already making it comfortable for every one. But there did not seem much for them to do, when they got there: every one was getting on nicely, and indeed, no one took any notice of them. Even Libellula was nowhere in sight; so of course they had to stay right near their own door-step. But as their cavern was above the path, in the side of a rocky ledge which 'Patkin said was called the Rockery, they could look down and over a good bit of the garden—and see something of what was going on, even if they could not wander about.

"Ta-ta-ra, ta-ta-ra," blared a trumpet's silvery tones from somewhere close by; and "All aboard—hurry up! —all aboard for the Isle of Between!" cried a Herald, clad in scarlet and gold, who went skipping and dancing along, "ta-ta-ra, ta-ta-ra, ta-ta-ra!"

"My goodness," cried a tall young Veronica who lived across the path, "I'm not half ready! When does it start?"

"When the evening star has set," some one answered just below where they stood; and right there was another Herald, without a trumpet—a Herald dressed in a velvety-purple tunic—bowing before Columbine. Indeed they were everywhere, they soon saw, rushing this

way and that among the garden folks, urging the need of haste, and taking charge and directing.

"Your very life depends upon it," cried another, pausing an instant to jump up and down in a perfect fever of anxiety, "it does indeed!"

"It may not seem so to you now," still another said as he raced by, "but General Pine-tree and his troops only succeeded in turning the invaders back last night after hours of the most savage fighting! And of course they'll return with reenforcements just as soon as they can muster them."

"Indeed *I* heard them," said one of the large Marigold family who lived further down, "and do you think you need to tell me to hurry? Am I not still sick with the terror that all helpless things who can neither flee nor defend themselves must feel? Shivering horrors! How they raged and they threatened, those two—terrible North Wind and his skulking ally, Jack Frost."

"Yes—and how General Pine-tree and all his troops reeled and bent and twisted in the effort to toss them back with their giant out-spread arms," said Columbine, "and how they hurled themselves forward against them again and again, seeking the lives of us who dwell here."

"Oh, oh! Yes, yes," cried Veronica, "I know it is as you say! And such memories make even the maddest

haste seem slow! But I'm not half ready!—oh, what shall I do?—I'm not *half* ready yet!"

"Well, don't *talk* about it," cried Betty, "but get ready!" Which surprised Veronica so much that she hurried up and did so.

"Where are they going?" asked Billy, watching the hurry and bustle of the Heralds and forgetting, he was so interested, that he had had no breakfast, "where do you suppose they're going, Betty?"

"I don't know," said Betty, looking very sober. The feeling that they were to be left all alone here, without even the flowers' companionship, almost overcame her courage. Where *was* Libellula? And the Princess Dulcinea? Or the lady Aea? Where was good and kind, though ugly Mr. Gryllus? Had every one forgotten them?

"They're going on the ships that no one can see," said a Herald that they had not noticed before, answering Billy's question, "that sail on seas no one may know—out and away to the lovely, stilly Isle of Between."

"The Isle of Between," said Betty, brought out of her doleful thoughts by this challenge to her geography, which was her favorite study, "I never heard of that before. Where is it, if you please, Mr. Herald?"

The Herald, who was dressed in green and bronze, laughed a little short laugh, and then answered, "The

Isle of Between is bounded on the near side by this summer, and on the far side by next summer—and it lies just off the coast of the famous Land of Nod. This of course you must have heard of many a time."

"Oh, it's not a real island, then," she exclaimed, never thinking that there was anything wrong in saying so. And so she was very much surprised when the green-and-bronze-clad Herald turned on her angrily.

"What do you mean," he demanded, "by that, pray? Not a *real* island? Why, I'm surprised at you! Why should you presume to make such a statement? What do you know about it?"

"Why—why—" said Betty very much taken aback, "I'm sure, Mr. Herald, I never thought—I didn't mean to make you angry. I—I never learned of it in g'ography, that's all. And the Land of Nod isn't—isn't—"

"Isn't what?" said he coming right up to her and looking at her very fiercely.

"Why, it just is *not,*" said she, though with some misgivings, you may be sure, in the face of his angry mien.

"That's about what might be expected," he spoke in the most disgusted tone she had ever heard, "just about! What good is this that you call g'ography, I'd like to know, if it's only taught you that something is *not?*"

"But g'ography didn't teach me that it was not," said Betty, anxious to defend her beloved maps and the great

globe representing the earth, which had been her father's —long, long ago!—the globe on which she used to mark out with her stubby little finger, under mother's guidance, the voyages that he was making—until the time when mother cried and said he had made one which they could not trace.

As she spoke she suddenly remembered this. Father had gone to a land that was not on that globe—nor on any of the maps in the books—sailing over a sea that no one could know, on a ship that no one could see. Perhaps she was wrong about the Land of Nod; perhaps it lay somewhere in the same direction, and perhaps the geography did not have everything in it, after all.

"The g'ography didn't teach me that it isn't," she began again, "but I thought it wasn't, because I could not find it there. Maybe I didn't look in the right place, though—maybe it's somewhere else."

"Well, that's more like it," said the Herald, looking a little less angry and fierce, "just you get over the idea that you can put your finger on everything, young lady. There's many a place and many a thing that you'll never know anything at all about, if you stick to *that* notion."

"Are all the flowers going to-day?" she asked, with a view to changing the subject as much as anything—though she did want to know.

"Oh, no," said he, "not all of them. Only the weakest

and tenderest start so soon. And some don't go for a long time—especially since they brought General Pine-tree and his troops here to stand guard. It's quite safe here until very late, thanks to them."

"We heard him stopping a company of Zephyrs, last night," said 'Patkin.

"Yes, so did I," said the Herald, "you see you never can tell whether a Zephyr is a North Wind outrider or not; that's the trouble. So he holds 'em all up—and gives 'em a scare too, as often as not."

"Can't North Wind hurt the General though—and *make* him let him come in?" asked Billy.

"No indeed! North Wind never gets past him,—for the harder he tries, the more the old General tears him to bits. And if he tries to sneak in close to the ground, there's the regiment of Spruce to catch and rend him. He's got no chance here at all."

"Then I don't see why the flowers must go away—to the Isle of Between," said Betty.

"Oh, they have to go just the same. For though he can keep out North Wind well enough, even General Pine-tree and all his Spruce army can't keep Jack Frost away. He steals in, you see, and doesn't hurl himself along; and so he gets by everything—everything except the cold frames."

"Oh, that's where they put the lettuce," said Betty, remembering about it suddenly.

"Lettuce, and a lot of things beside," said the Herald, "but I mustn't stay here chattering any longer. I've got work to do. Good-by."

He skipped away so quickly they hardly had a chance to say "good-by" in turn; and right there where he had been, or just beyond where he had been, stood Mr. Gryllus.

"Oh, here's Mr. Gryllus," cried all three, running toward him, "good-morning, dear Mr. Gryllus. Are you going away too?"

"Not just now, not just now," answered he, "it's nice and warm and dry under these leaves—and the sun shines down into the garden; and Pine-tree and his Spruce soldiers make it a pretty safe and comfortable place, well into the winter—well into the winter."

"That's what that Herald has been telling us," said 'Patkin, "but of course it won't do for these children, even so."

"Oh, well," Mr. Gryllus whirled about in his sudden way, "winter is a long way off yet. Don't bother about that now."

"What do you suppose is keeping Libellula?" said Betty looking up into the air in the direction he usually

came, "he's always here earlier than this. And we haven't had any breakfast. Surely he hasn't forgotten us!"

"Better not wait breakfast for him, though," said Mr. Gryllus, "here's a little pile of grass seeds where the gardener spilled some yesterday. Can't you get something out of them?"

They were not very inviting; but as they grew more and more hungry every minute, 'Patkin suggested that they nibble at them until Libellula did appear. And so they set to work, and nibbled for such a long time that they finally had eaten as much as they wanted for breakfast—and still no Libellula. But the lady Aea came in sight, flying rather low and not as swiftly as usual; and she settled down with a sigh, and said "Good morning." Then, after a glance around, "Are you alone yet?" she asked.

"Alone except for Mr. Gryllus," said Betty.

"So? Mm—huh, well—" she sighed again, and went to one of the nectar bearing clovers, and lighted on it to bring it down for them to drink, "well, it's not to be wondered at. Come, get at this flower, for I haven't much time—nor much energy this morning, either. And there's a lot to be done."

"Does your head ache?" asked Betty sympathetically.

"No, my head doesn't ache—whatever that means,"

said Aea, "but I am heavy—heavy in my wings! And stupid! I—I want to sleep."

She seemed almost to fall asleep while Betty was getting the chalices of the flower open and their contents out for herself and Billy and 'Patkin. And when she said, "There, that will be enough for this morning, thank you, lady Aea," she jumped as if she were in drowse—which surprised them very much, naturally, when you remember what a lively and busy creature they had always seen her.

"I guess you need a vacation," suggested 'Patkin who knew some of the signs of overwork.

"Oh, no," said she, "it's the weather, I guess. No one feels up to the mark in such weather."

Yet it was a beautiful day, and Betty and Billy and 'Patkin all felt very well indeed—or would have felt well if it had not been for the dread of their future that haunted them. But that grew less as the sun rose higher; for it was almost as warm as any day of summer had been, and it is always hard to remember about winter you know, when summer is here.

She flew away with a good deal of buzzing, and without saying anything more. And not until she was beyond call did they remember that she had not told them anything about Libellula—which they had hoped she would.

"I'll stay around a while," said Mr. Gryllus, "and take you for a walk a little way, if you want to go—until he comes any way. I can look out for you pretty well. Come on if you want to. You'll be all right."

So for a walk they went, down the path to where 'Patkin's Lady was working with Angelo and telling him what to do and why, as she so often did. And this time they were getting the garden ready for winter, it seemed—taking up some of the bulbs, and cutting off the tops of all the flowers that had turned brown and dry—"thrown away their old clothes," Angelo called it in his funny speech, whereat the Lady laughed. "Yes—and so we put them in the rag bag," she had answered; and they saw Angelo wheel a barrow load of these tops away down to a heap of dead leaves and grass cuttings and garden rubbish of all sorts, and dump them there.

And he raked up leaves—hundreds and hundreds of them—and they saw among them many of the Heralds who had been hurrying the flowers all the morning, and urging them to embark—oak leaves and maple leaves and beech leaves and leaves of the dogwood and ever so many others. "Blankets," said the big Hollyhock who stood up strong and fearless yet, above all the other plants in the garden, "winter blankets, you know."

"What! The little Heralds are?" said Betty in astonishment.

"Yes," said Hollyhock, "their work as Heralds is done when all the flowers are warned and hurried away; and then they fall asleep themselves, and are made into winter blankets."

"For the flowers' beds?" asked Billy shyly.

"Exactly," it was Mr. Gryllus who answered, "for the flowers' beds—and for us to burrow under, when the time comes."

"Only *we* don't want blankets on to keep us warm," said the Hollyhock, "we want our blankets on to keep us cold."

"You do? Why, how very strange," said Betty.

"No doubt, to you; but your way seems strange to us —for you see, if we were kept warm, we'd all the time be dreaming it was time to wake up—and we wouldn't rest at all. Indeed, it's more than likely we would wake up, and make our way up into the outdoors—and get our noses frozen right off for our foolishness!"

"Oh, I see," said Betty, though she did not see at all, and could not think for the life of her, what made them turn things around so.

"But if Jack Frost comes along and creeps in and locks our doors tight, thinking he's going to catch us maybe while we sleep, and *then* our blankets are put on, there he has to stay, the rascal! And then we sleep, snug and secure. It's his going in and out that hurts us,

you see; but he can't get up through our blanket once he's been caught under it. That's where we fool him!"

"Then you don't want your blankets till Jack Frost has arrived, I take it," said 'Patkin.

"No indeed. Let him get in and get in *deep;* and then fasten him in—that's our method—for then we are all safe and sound for the winter. But let him get in and then go *out,* and he'll take some of us along with him, sure as anything! And the ones he doesn't take along with him, he'll worry and disturb until their rest will be spoiled—and then they are as good as nothing at all when spring finally comes in earnest. You know it's his great trick to masquerade as Spring; to try to fool us into thinking she is here. Oh, you have to watch him! He's a clever villain, with his fickle ways and his pretendings."

"And some of us, you know," said a Tea Rose in such a sweet and gentle voice that it was like music, "were never meant to dwell where he can come at all. So we are in great need of guarding."

"Yes—*you,* for instance. You have to be covered from him altogether, don't you?" said Hollyhock, "can't wait for him to nip at you even, before you have your blankets."

"No," said she, "we and all who are as sensitive as we, must be covered so that he can never come near us.

So we are like you are, little boy and little girl, you see; blankets over *us* are to keep us warm and snug."

"See the difference?" asked Mr. Gryllus, eyeing them sharply.

"I—I think I do," said Betty, a little uncertainly.

"I think you *don't,*" he retorted, in his blunt way, "but see! It's like this:—if they're hardy old chaps like Hollyhock here, they want to freeze under and stay frozen under all winter. But if they're tender and frail like Tea Rose, they don't want to be frozen at all! Is that right?"

"Yes," said Tea Rose and Hollyhock nodding to them, and then to each other, "that's exactly right, Mr. Gryllus. You have stated it most concisely." And then they sang a duet.

WINTER PROTECTION

Tea Rose:—

"Ah me, ah woe! Alas that it's so,
But it's true there is nothing can save
My life, if Jack Frost
Comes near me!—I'm lost!
So cover me deep
E'er I fall asleep,
And leave no cranny through which he may creep!"

Hollyhock;—

"Oh dear! How queer it seems, that some fear
The frolicsome, rollicksome rascal;
Different by nature

From this frail creature,
It suits *me* the best
To have my earth-nest
Locked fast by the rogue when I take my rest."

Both together;—
"So spread my bed just as I have said,
We're not to be treated alike;
What's suited to *me,*
Might possibly be
The worst thing to do
For all but a few
Of the plants that depend for care, upon you."

Tea Rose;—
"Just mind the kind, and you will soon find,
You'll not do the wrong thing by any,
Be sure you cover,
Tender things over,
Before it freezes,—
Before Jack Frost seizes
Earth in his grip, and squeezes and squeezes!"

Hollyhock;—
"But let him get his icy seal set,
On the land, and the lesser waters,
Before you begin
My kind to tuck in,—
Then quick!—make him fast,
And while winter shall last
Don't give him a chance to creep up and get past!"

Both Together;—
"For he, you see,—sly though he may be,—
Can't go up or down through a blanket;
He must abide,

On whichever side,
He is when you spread
It over my head;—
Do just as I say, and I'll have nought to dread!"

It grew warmer and warmer as the day wore on; and though Libellula did not appear, the children and 'Patkin found the time passing pleasantly enough, for Mr. Gryllus was good company. Just before noon a pair of Formicas came hurrying along—a pair who stopped when he hailed them, and listened and chatted, showing no signs of the short temper that the children supposed all their clan possessed. Indeed, they were quite affable.

"On the warpath?" Gryllus had asked them, chuckling.

"Mercy, no!" said the one on the nigh side, "we're hunting eggs."

"Indeed," said Gryllus, "I've noticed you're fond of them. Do you expect to get 'em hard boiled or scrambled to-day?"

"Oh, neither," explained the one on the far side, "it's not that kind of egg we are hunting. We want eggs for hatching."

"Hatching?" said he, his tone a question.

"Hatching new herds, you know," said the near one, "most of our finest have been destroyed. It's dreadful—we have so few left. We simply must have eggs, and a lot of them, to start new with."

It seemed very queer, indeed, to hear any one speak of hatching "herds"! But Betty and Billy tried not to laugh, thinking it likely they did not know that one said "flocks" when speaking of chickens. What such tiny creatures as these Formicas were going to do with chickens though, if they found ever so many eggs and succeeded in hatching them, made Betty wonder.

"What was the matter?" she asked, "did they get chicken-pox?"

"Oh, no," answered the far one—Skelter, they learned her name was, afterwards, "they were overcome by a deluge, as often happens to them, unfortunately."

"That was too bad. Couldn't you keep them where it would be safer?"

"Not very well. You see there are a great many; and we have to pasture them where the juices are good."

Well she certainly was getting things mixed up! "Pasture" and "juices"! Betty looked as puzzled as she was; and Mr. Gryllus came to the rescue.

"I guess you've never seen any of the Formicas' herds," said he, "nor any of their pastures. Would you like to?"

Indeed they would, and they said so, eagerly. And then Miss Helter, Skelter's sister, rose to the occasion and said, "Why, come right along now, and we'll take you to one that's right near here."

Betty looked at Mr. Gryllus to see if he approved of their going. And he said, "Go ahead! I'll wait around here for you." So go ahead they did.

They had to walk very fast to keep up, though both Helter and Skelter tried to walk very slowly. And it was a long way after all, for just their two legs—and four—to travel; so when they came to the trunk of something that grew very high—much higher than the grasses and higher than many of the flowers—they were pretty tired. Helter started straight up it, but Betty cried out in dismay.

"Oh," said she, "wherever are you going? You said you'd show us the pasture."

"Well, that's where I'm going," answered Helter, "what's the matter?"

"But we can't," said Betty, "don't you see? We can't walk up straight like that. We can't stick on!"

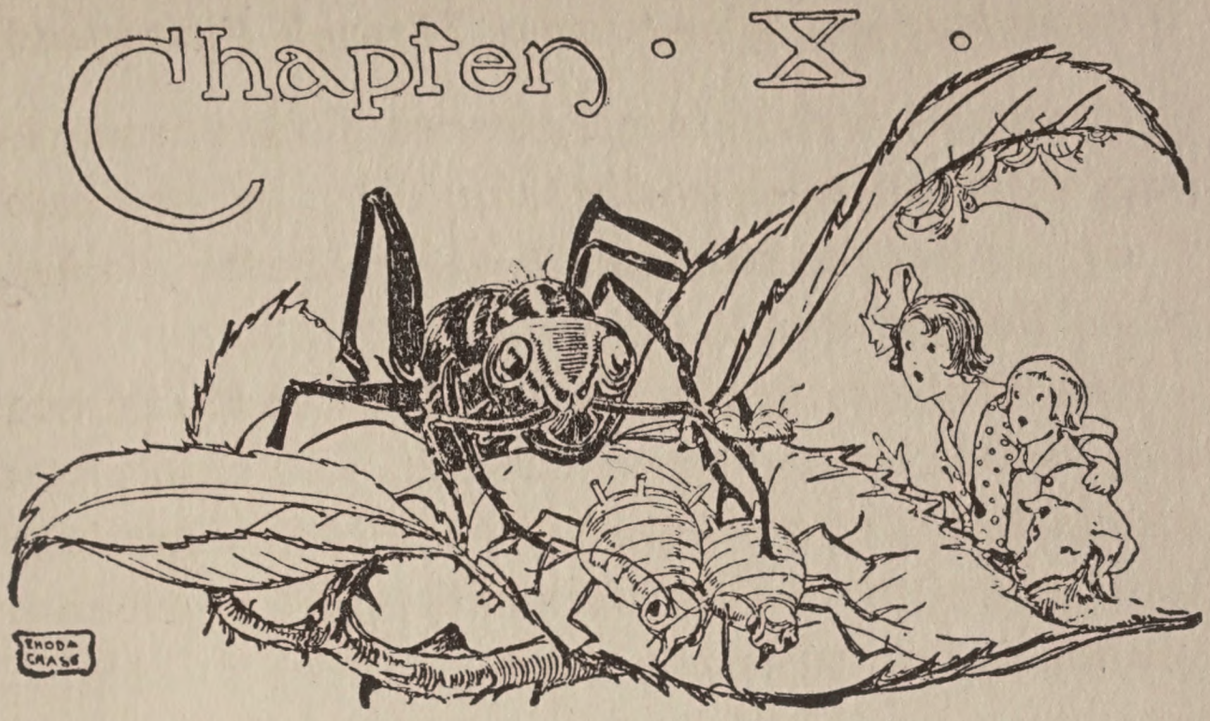
"We'll have to go around by this other lane," said Skelter, "this isn't so steep. My sister forgot I guess that you're not made on the same plan that we are."

With that she turned off and started another way, which was as she said, not so steep. But even so it was a pretty stiff climb; and as it was only a branch of a bush of some kind that they were walking on, it was a narrow path that they had to follow, else they would slip over one side or the other and take a terrible tumble.

"I wish we hadn't come," growled 'Patkin from behind, as he saw how hard it was for Billy, and how hard it was for Betty to help him, "I wish we hadn't got into this! I don't like it."

He wished it harder than he ever had wished anything in all his life, before they got out of it, you may be sure; and so did Billy and Betty. For a terrible experience was ahead of them. But afterwards—well, in due time you will find out about afterwards.

Chapter X



THROUGH THE RAINBOW

THE long climb came to an end at last, as everything is bound to do; but oh, dear! What they found there! Helter ran way on ahead, excitedly; for something she saw evidently upset her. And Skelter waved her horns nervously, and wanted to hurry, but was too good natured or polite or something to do so, when that would have meant leaving them quite alone. She kept raising up and looking ahead, however; and once in a while she would run on a few steps in spite of herself, it seemed, to peer after her sister.

"Dear me," she said at last, "it does seem as if there were no end to the trouble and annoyance we are having this year. If it keeps on much longer, we shall just have to move—migrate, and stake a claim somewhere

away off as far from here as we can get. We simply can't stand it to be so pestered!"

"Has it been worse than usual this summer?" asked Betty, sympathetically.

"Oh, yes. Much worse. Indeed, we've hardly had a day without something happening. If it hasn't been the herds, it's been the children; and if it hasn't been the children, it's been raiders; and if it hasn't been raiders, it's been a flood; and if it hasn't been a flood, it's been—well, it's been something else just as bad. I can't begin to tell all that it's been, in one sitting."

"How dreadful," said Betty, without in the least knowing what she was talking about.

"And now there is something wrong with this pasture, as sure as my name is Skelter! Helter's right! Oh, dear—whatever are we to *do?*"

It was an angry cry rather than a sorrowful one, however—and somehow Betty did not feel as sympathetic as she thought she ought to; and 'Patkin's hair ruffled up all along his neck, as he looked sharply at their escort. By this time they had almost reached the end of the way; and ahead they could make out several forms, crowded together—large and small, they seemed to be—over which and among which Helter was running this way and that, stopping now and then to touch one or another with a paw, or with one of her flexible horns. Some-

times, indeed, she seemed to stroke them and pet them, just as the children stroked and petted 'Patkin whenever he came close to them. Betty thought that was rather nice, whatever the things were; she could understand perfectly that they might be pets and that Helter and Skelter might love them very much, indeed, if they were.

And then when she remembered how angry and sorrowful she would feel if anything threatened 'Patkin, she grew a little more sympathetic. After all, it was not *to* her that Skelter had spoken so sharply. And the anger in her tone was not for them; it was, perhaps, very righteous anger, directed against something that menaced their pets—and so it was too bad of herself, Betty felt, not to be sorry.

She had got this far in reasoning with herself, when Helter came running back to them. "Do you know," she cried, paying no attention to them but addressing her sister, "do you know I believe there is another one of those storms coming? I can feel it in the air. What *shall* we do?"

Skelter looked at her a moment in silence; then suddenly she turned to them as they stood watching her. "It's some of your clan's doing," she snapped, quite taking their breath away.

"Oh," cried Betty, "Miss Skelter, please don't be an-

noyed at *us*. Why, we've been right here with you all the time—and we never can help it if it storms. Truly, you are mistaken. What could we have to do with it?"

Skelter did not say any more, but she snapped her queer looking pincers together in the way of her kind, and glared at them for an instant before she turned away, and ran ahead to where the creatures stood, all closely packed together. And Helter ran after her; so Betty and Billy and 'Patkin had a chance to look about, and to have a word together, privately.

"Watch out carefully," said 'Patkin, the instant they were alone, "I tell you, there's trouble afloat. We ought never to have come on this trip; but now we're here, we've got to face whatever happens. So be prepared. Don't let them catch us off guard for an instant! I tell you, you can't trust these things a bit in the world."

"Oh, 'Patkin, don't you think maybe you're too suspicious," said Betty, looking after them and seeing how anxiously they ran about their pets and seemed to be trying eagerly to move them from the positions they occupied, "see how much they think of their—their—cows, I guess they are. Cows and little calves, or what they think are cows and calves. I'm sure I can't imagine what the things are. Can you?"

"Do you 'member those queer things that sang a funny song the other day, when we rode over to the pear tree?" asked Billy, suddenly. He had been looking up at the herds long and thoughtfully.

"Why yes, of course I do," answered his sister. "Why?"

"I think these—cows—are something like them," said Billy.

'Patkin looked at him in surprise; then sniffed the air up in the direction of the end of the road whereon they stood—or the end of the branch, I suppose I ought to say. "They certainly—do—have something of the —aroma," said he at last, between sniffs, "but I can hardly believe—"

"Let's go up a little farther, and see," said Betty, "oh, do you suppose anybody would do anything so dreadful as keep those wicked things for pets?"

"As far as the dreadful part of it goes," said 'Patkin, "I think these Formicas would do anything. But I'm not sure yet that these things are those things—though they are something like 'em. We can go a little closer, if you want to. But do be careful."

Helter and Skelter were paying no attention to them whatsoever, now; but they were glad of this rather than otherwise. It gave them a better chance to satisfy their curiosity.

"Do you know where we are?" asked Betty, as they moved forward very slowly and carefully, "I think it's almost the *tip-top* branch of some kind of bush, don't you?"

"Looks like that," agreed 'Patkin, keeping close against Billy.

"We're awfully high up, anyway," said Billy, peeking over the edge of the branch and then drawing back quickly, when he saw, through an opening in the leaves below, how far from the ground they really were. Fortunately they were not able to realize this all of the time, for the branches beneath them were so numerous and the leaves so thick that it did not really seem high at all, unless they saw through. That one glimpse was rather terrifying, though.

Suddenly they came to a different kind of wood, under their feet; indeed, it was not wood at all that they were standing on, but green stem, soft and tender—as stem always is at the tip of the branch. And then they saw that it was only on the green and tender growth that these herds of the Formicas were huddled together. This evidently was the "pasture."

"Billy, you're right," whispered Betty, looking ahead as they moved on slowly, "they *are*—that's just what they are—those horrible, heartless, wicked things that we saw that day! Oh, I wish we'd never come here!

I wish we'd never seen those old ants! The mean, dreadful creatures, to make pets of these—"

"What's that?" said a sharp voice from behind them, "what's that you're talking about? Who's mean? Who's dreadful? Who's an old ant?"

The way had grown very narrow as they approached the top; and whoever it was behind, they were quite sure they would not be able to pass them. They all turned their heads, cautiously; and there, right upon their heels —right upon 'Patkin's heels, to be very accurate, was another one of the Formicas, larger and not nearly as good natured looking as Helter or Skelter.

'Patkin did not wait for any one else to answer her. "We're talking about your tribe," said he, bristling, "*that's* who we are talking about! And what are you going to do about it?"

"Oh," exclaimed Betty, "you ought to be ashamed of yourselves! To think of your keeping those wicked thieves and lawless things for your pets! I think it's dreadful. I never would have believed it!"

The newcomer looked at them all three for a minute, as if she thought they had taken leave of their senses; then she just stood back and laughed and laughed and laughed. "My, my, but you are a funny lot," said she, quite out of breath, "and don't you give yourselves airs? My, *my!*"

"Well, just the same, we thought you were respect'ble nice people," said Billy, "or we wouldn't have come up to see your old pasture. And it is wicked to be friends with thieves, I don't care who they are or where they live! And we aren't going to have anything more to do with you—Betty nor 'Patkin nor me."

She laughed again; then she suddenly stopped laughing, and glared at him—and at 'Patkin and Betty. "Take care," said she, "take care how you talk to me! Who are you, I should like to know, to come here and be so saucy? Don't you know that I could twist your heads off in just half a minute?" And with this she rose up, as they had seen her kind do so many times, and snapped her frightful pincer arms at them.

Betty screamed, and drew Billy closer and gripped 'Patkin's collar with a fiercer grip; but the space was so narrow that they could not go on: neither could they go back down with her blocking the way and brandishing and threatening them so close. And she could not go past them. So there they remained, facing each other. And there Helter found them, when she came running down to see what was going on.

"What's the matter?" she called out, "why are you screaming?"

"Good reason why," snapped the angry newcomer, "wherever did these creatures come from, I'd like to

know? If they aren't the worst group of worthless trash that I ever saw, I'll give up! Do you know anything about them?"

"Well, we know a little," said Helter, looking at them in a not over friendly fashion, "just a little. They wanted to come to the pasture with Skelter and me, so we thought there'd be no harm in letting them. They don't amount to anything, of course."

"Well, maybe we don't," said Betty, forgetting the necessity for being discreet in her anger and outraged feelings, "but that's only because we're so small. If we were our own natural size, I guess you'd think twice before you talked that way to us."

"Oh, but you are *not* your own natural size," said Helter, coming closer and looking her right in the eye, "so what are you going to do, my haughty little miss? Don't you think you're rather rash, to count on size, when size is what you have not got?"

"I'm not counting on size," said Betty, "I'm only telling you that I think you're taking advantage of us because we haven't our usual size. And I do think you *are*—nothing is going to make me say any different."

"It's really a very silly argument," it was Skelter speaking, over her sister's shoulder, "and you'll never finish it. So drop it—and let us see if we can't get something done toward saving this remnant of a herd,

if such a storm is coming as you said a moment ago you felt in the air. If we hustled maybe we could get enough on to the roots to make a beginning down there. They aren't as likely to look there for them, you know."

"I doubt it," said Helter, "but, of course, if you want to try, I'm ready to help. Run down, Skurry, and bring along a lot of the crowd, and let's see what we can do. And you three—" she turned back again to the children and 'Patkin—"you three get out of the way, if you don't want to get into trouble. We've had about enough of you; and if you don't want to get dropped off, *get* off! Understand?"

"But you asked us to come," began Betty, "and you know my brother is lame and can't hurry; and it's hard for us to walk here anyway. And why did you pretend to be friendly, if you weren't? Why did you ask us to come with you, and then turn around and act like this?"

"Why did you come with us, and then turn around and criticize our friends and our manners?"

"Well, perhaps I ought not to have done that," admitted Betty, "but it is wicked, what you are doing; and when anything's wicked, if one is told of it, sometimes they will stop doing it. We would like you and like to be friends with you, if you would not have these horrible robbers for—for cows."

"Well, let me tell you, young lady," Helter rose up

and snapped her pincer arms right in her face, "let me tell you this! We don't care whether you are friendly or *not,* or whether you like us or *not!* But you are to mind your own affairs; and keep a civil tongue in your heads. And you are to get out of this pasture, and *out of our way!* And then we can forget all about you—and that's what we want most of all to do. Bah! Clear out, all of you; and be quick about it."

She turned and ran back up the branch toward the tip, where the herds of Aphids were sitting and drinking in the plant's juices as fast as they could and as hard, and puffing themselves up like small balloons, as they did so. And with Skelter, she went about among them again, stroking one here and another there, and sometimes lapping up a tiny drop of honey dew that one would offer her—or seem to offer her. Betty and Billy watched them, from the distance that they were, with much interest; but mindful of her orders to get off if they did not want to be put off, 'Patkin urged them not to linger a moment, but to seek safety by getting off on to a side branch, if they could.

So down they made their way, after only a moment of such watching; and coming very soon to a tender green branch that led away from this main one, they stepped off on to it just in time to avoid meeting Skurry at the head of a great column of her kinsfolk, all mount-

ing to the pasture which they had just left. "I wonder if they're really going to carry them down," said Betty, torn between the desire to see what was going to happen, and desire to get once more on to the ground.

"So do I wonder," said 'Patkin, "but I'm not in favor of wasting any time at watching 'em, just the same. We can't afford to take chances with these treacherous Formicas, my dears. Let us get to the ground as fast as we possibly can; it's a long distance, and a difficult road—and going down hill is often much harder than the going up."

That is what they found it; for the footing was even more uncertain, and the look of the way was more terrifying, somehow. Sometimes, indeed, they just had to stand still and wait a moment, quietly, to keep from getting so frightened that they would have fallen off anyway. And what a distance it was that they had to go! For the way led criss-cross, now over here and now over there—unless they went straight down, which they could not do, owing to its being so steep.

Perhaps they were a third of the way to the earth, when along came another group of Formicas—a headlong, rushing group, that waited for nothing and wouldn't give anything a chance to get out of their way. And just as they were almost up to them, pell mell from above came Helter and Skelter and Skurry and their

crowd—rushing even more headlong than the ones coming up.

"It's come, it's come," cried Helter, "that strangling storm! Run, run—everybody *run!* Get out of my way! Get out of our way! Run, run, *run!*"

All the rest were crying out the same things—"Run," "Get out of my way," "Run," and so on. Goodness, what a commotion it was; and what a useless thing it was for Betty and Billy and 'Patkin even to try to escape the onrush! Why the Formicas had chosen to come down by this round about and indirect way, no one will ever know. But chosen it they had, to the undoing of the three; and what happened then was all intended to happen, I have no doubt.

It was all over in just no time, of course—though it seemed ages to the children and the dog. Racing down upon them came the crowd from above; and almost at the instant of their realizing their danger from them, something very queer filled the air—and Billy cried out, "Oh, we're right in a rainbow!"

Truly it seemed that they were. Over them and under them and almost through them, played the wonderful blues and scarlets and violets and yellows of the rainbow, dazzling their eyes, and adding, you will readily guess, to the confusion that was everywhere about them. And then something suddenly made them cough

—and then made them sneeze; and *then* they suddenly found themselves stepping on a slippery place on the branch, and slipping—slipping—slipping!

A sudden bump and thump marked the actual contact with Helter and Skelter and the rest, but whether they were falling also, Betty and Billy and 'Patkin could not guess. They three clung to each other frantically—and away they went down, down—end over end!—upside down and down side up!—now this one on top, now another—plunging this way and that, and rolling over —now in midair, and now on a leaf, or what they presumed was a leaf! Of course such a tumble makes it difficult to know what anything is, while it's going on; but whenever they hit, it seemed to them it was a leaf that they hit against.

Nothing stopped them, however. From leaf after leaf they slipped or bounded, and went on falling; but suddenly they fell *into* something, instead of upon or against it. And then they did stop short: and their tumble was interrupted—but oh, dear! Not in an agreeable way!

"Bom—bom—bom—brrz—zrrr—zrrr—rum, bom—bom—bom!" rang in their ears from right beside them, "What do you mean? Who are you, disturbing me? Get out of here, get out of here, get out of here," it was

a very deep voice, "bom—bom—bom—brrz—zrrr—zrum!"

A cloud of dust rose all around them, and they felt themselves thrown this way and that by some sort of queer, springy substance on which they seemed to have landed; and get on to their feet they could not, to save their lives. And all of the time they were trying, this deep voiced person was scolding and buzzing and bumbling, in the most awful fashion imaginable—and the most threatening! Through it all, though, Betty never let go of 'Patkin's collar, or of Billy's hand; and so they did not get separated—which was one of the luckiest things in the world, as you will see, later.

Sneezing and coughing, 'Patkin cried, "It's pollen dust. That's what this is! What have we struck *now,* I'd like to know."

"Struck *me*—that's what you've struck," said the rumbling, though musical, voice, "struck me—or very nearly did. Take yourselves off, if you please. What do you mean, coming in here to disturb my rest? Get out, I say."

"Well, we'd be glad to get out," cried Betty, in a very exasperated and breathless tone, "if we could. But we can't do *any*thing, here. Isn't this dreadful? Oh, what in the world is going to happen *next,* I'd like to know."

All over the place they struggled, trying to get on to their feet. But every time they made the effort, the reedy stuff in the midst of which they had landed, would throw them down again. So at last they gave up in despair, and sat still and looked at each other, between sneezes and coughs. And then they got to laughing—for they were sights!

Yellow pollen grains were in their hair and all over them—on the children's faces, and powdering their clothes; and in their eyes; and all over 'Patkin, so that when he wagged his tail or tried to, a golden cloud rose and set them to sneezing again. And they sat in the funniest positions imaginable,—for being determined to stick together, they had fallen just any way at all; and there they had finally stopped, breathless with their efforts. And right beside them sat the complaining one with the big voice—a creature that reminded them of the Princesses and lady Aea and all their tribe, and that yet was different from them, they saw at the first glance. For one thing, this personage was very much larger; and for another, it was much furrier, and its fur was longer. Really, here was some one almost as shaggy as 'Patkin's self.

Just as Billy was about to speak to this individual, they heard a queer, rushing noise, and felt the queer something in the air once more; and again they seemed

to be in the midst of the rainbow; and away went this new acquaintance, taking wing suddenly and making a loud humming and bumbling as he went. And Billy exclaimed, "A bumble-bee," as he watched him out of sight.

They looked around, and began to realize that it was a flower in the midst of which they had landed—a great, half double, wide open pink rose, into whose very heart they had tumbled. And of course Mr. Bumble-bee was tucked in there, asleep probably, when they came upon him so suddenly. No wonder he was cross about it!

The petals of the flower they saw were glistening with something,—something that settled on them from the air more and more as they looked, and that settled upon themselves too, moist and cool. What could it be? Certainly not rain, for the sun was shining. Yet everywhere were glistening little globes of the moisture, like dew drops—only so small that a pin point would have been huge by comparison. They filled the air too, and reflected the rainbow colors, just as the soap bubbles which they so often had blown, did—and that was what made it seem that they were right in the midst of the rainbow. Might it be, indeed, that they were? And would they find a treasure—a pot of gold or something wonderful, maybe—if they were only down on the ground where they might dig?

It has taken as much as a minute to tell about all of

this; but it did not take anywhere near a minute for it all to happen, and for them to wonder all these things. While they were trying again to get to their feet, they thought them; and while they were still thinking them, they felt the cool moisture of the glistening mist, enveloping them like fog—and then somehow they slipped off the flower as they had slipped from the branch—and again they were tumbling!

But almost before they could realize that this was so, they came up standing—feet on the ground, and as sound as a dollar, each one of them, strung out in a row. And if you will believe it, there they were right beside a great bush of Killarney roses, and the bush was dripping from the soap-suds shower it had just received. And they were all three their very own natural size and selves!

They were quite out of breath, what with the tumbling about and with surprise too; and they just stood and looked at each other and down at themselves, and gasped! At least they did this for a minute. Then suddenly 'Patkin broke away and went racing along the walk—and they looked to see where he was going. And there was the Lady! But she did not see him, nor them —for she was walking away, toward the house. In just no time, though, he reached her.

And "Woof, woof!" he cried; "oh, my dear and well

beloved Lady! Here am I come back! 'Patkin has come back! And see who I have brought! Oh, I'm so glad and happy—and you will be so, too, I know. How I love you, and I love them, too; and so will you, dear, lovely Lady mine!"

She turned around quickly at the first sound of his voice; and Betty and Billy saw her open her arms and throw them around 'Patkin and heard her cry out, "Oh, you darling dog! Where *have* you been? I thought you were gone, forever, blessed old 'Patkin!"

She petted him every bit as much as he wanted, you may be sure of that. But it was quite a time before she understood that he was trying to explain something to her. Then she followed his look along the garden walk —and there she saw the figures of a little boy and a little girl, that she had never seen before.

"Why, 'Patkin," said she, coming toward them quickly, "is this what you've been trying to make me understand? Haven't I been stupid? Who are they? Little friends, I know—but where did you find them, old fellow?"

He brought her up to them, wagging his tail very proudly and going through all the motions he had made before, when introducing them. But it seemed to Betty that he talked more in his own peculiar language than he had done lately—though she still understood him.

And the Lady, too, seemed to understand, for she came to them and knelt down beside them, and said "Why, my dears! How glad I am to see you! Has 'Patkin been with you all this time?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered Betty, "he has been with us quite a long time. And we love him very dearly."

"And where was that, my dears?" asked she. "Where in the world did you come from?"

They looked around, and then looked at each other; and then they looked at 'Patkin. "Tell her," he barked, "tell her! You can always tell her,—*anything.*"

"Why," said Billy, frowning a little bit, uncertain of just where they had come from, "why, we came—"

"Out of the rose bush," finished Betty, as he paused. But she too frowned, feeling that that was a very unsatisfactory thing to say. So she took a long breath and was just about to go into explanations, when the Lady threw back her head and laughed delightedly, showing all her lovely teeth.

"You darling children," she cried, and gathered them both into her arms, "why, I believe that's exactly where you *did* come from! And so you must belong right here, in my garden; don't you?"

'Patkin barked joyfully at that; and they smiled a little bit shyly, into her tender eyes.

"Well, we *did* come out of it," said Betty, "but that

isn't all. There's a great deal more; and some of it we don't understand—but perhaps you will."

"Of course she will," said 'Patkin, "but don't bother your heads about that now. Just come along and let's have something to eat. If you're as hungry as *I* am—"

The Lady seemed to know what he was saying as well as he did himself; and she rose and took each of them by the hand, and turned toward the house. "Go ahead, Angelo," she called to the gardener, as they came to where he was spraying another rose bush with soapsuds, "go over them all with it if you see a sign of an Aphid. They won't need it again, though, this summer; for it's so late now that no new ones will hatch out, I'm sure. I am going in with my visitors."

And in they went and had a perfectly wonderful supper, with biscuits hot and feathery, just out of the oven; and honey; and milk; and cold chicken; and cake with nuts in it; and delicious peaches and grapes, to nibble on when they could eat nothing more.

"It's not a scientific supper for little folks," said the Lady, laughing, "but for once I'm going to fill you up as I like, and you like—and science must take a back seat."

She listened while they told her about the Orphanage; and about their own dear mother; and about father, who used to go away on ships, and wore a coat with lovely buttons on it, and gold lace things on the shoulders; and

about oh, ever so many things that they thought of, and wanted to tell her.

And then she took them upstairs as it grew dusk and called the nicest elderly servant who reminded them a great deal of old nurse Ellen that sometimes came to help mother; only this one's name was Mary instead of Ellen; and between them they made ready the loveliest warm bath for Betty and then for Billy; and when they were bathed, from somewhere came small night garments that just fitted them; and they were tucked into the softest, sweetest beds. And then the Lady crooned a little song to them—and before they knew it they went to sleep.

The Lady stood up at last and looked at them, first one and then the other—a long, long time. And tears were on her cheeks; and she stooped and kissed each of them before she went away and left them. And for a long time she sat downstairs alone, thinking, and thinking, and thinking. And then she suddenly went and called Mary, the nice, elderly servant; and said to her, "Mary, I want you to come here and talk with me a little while. I have an idea."

And when they had talked a long time, Mary said tremulously, "I think it's grand, indeed, ma'am! And nothin' that I know could make me any happier than

havin' the darlin's to take care of. It's my own belief, ma'am, heaven has sent 'em to you—and made good old 'Patkin the agent of doin' so. Out of the rose bush, indeed—the blessed darlin's! That's exactly where they did come from, I do believe—as sure as I'm livin', ma'am."

So it came about that they did find a treasure even though it was only a soapsuds rainbow after all; for they found a home! And the end of their great adventure was greater than any other part of it. And 'Patkin rejoiced all the days of his life that they had followed the Formicas to the pasture place, although it had been such a terrible trial.

But that is just it, you see; you never can tell about trials until afterwards—and sometimes not until a long time afterwards. If they had not gone on this trip, for instance, and had not therefore been clambering around on the rose bush when the soap-suds shower descended upon it, they would never, perhaps, have come back to their own true size—for it must have been the soap bubbles that restored them, he was sure. And so they would never have come here to live with him and with his dear Lady. And if they had never come to live with him and his dear Lady, the great doctor would never have seen Billy and made him well—

and so perhaps he would always have been lame, instead of having both his legs grow perfectly good and sound and true.

But no more soap bubbles will Billy blow, although Alec wanted him to keep the old clay pipe, when finally he took it back to him. And when Angelo sprays for Aphids, Betty and Billy and 'Patkin all three, stand at some distance away—not to run the risk of anything happening to them again. Some things seem like a dream, true enough, after they have happened and are all over and past; but after all, what is the difference between a dream and a reality—especially while you're dreaming?

THE END

GLOSSARY OF INSECT NAMES

Agrotis; *agrotis* species. A family of moths of which the young or larvæ are generally called cutworms.

Anopheles; *anopheles* species. The malarial mosquito.

Aphid; *aphis* species. The plant lice generally, which are insects of the order *Aphididæ*.

Apis, "the kingdom of"; *apis mellifera,* the honey-bee.

Bufo, "sir"; *bufo americanus.* The common native toad.

Chlænius; *chlænius æstivus.* The preying ground beetle, which hunts at night the insects that attack plants.

Culex; *culex pipiens.* The fresh water mosquito.

Formica; *formica* species. The common ants, insects of the order *Formicidæ.*

Gryllus; *gryllus neglectus.* The native cricket.

Lacewings, the; *chrysopa* species. The lacewing flies, the young or larvæ of which is one of man's most valuable insect allies.

Libellula, *libellula* species. The dragon flies, insects of the order *Libellulidæ.*

Melanoplus, *melanoplus femur-rubrum.* The common native grasshopper.

Musca, *musca* species. Flies of various kinds, gnats, etc.

Photuris, *photuris* species. The fire-flies, the larvæ of which are generally called glow-worms.

Psylla, *psylla* species. The jumping plant lice, leaf hoppers, etc.

Terrapin scale, *eulecanium nigrofasciatum.* The most widely distributed of the scale insects, attacking trees of all kinds.

PLANT LISTS

THE ANNUAL FLOWERS THAT ARE THE EASIEST TO GROW

Common name	*Colors*	*Botanical name*
Marigolds	All shades of yellow and white	*Calendula*
Candytuft	Rose, lavender and white	*Iberis umbellata*
Morning glory (a vine)	Blue, rose, white	*Convolvulus major*
Poppy	Deep reds up to white	*Papaver*
Sweet peas	All colors	*Lathyrus odoratus*
Nasturtiums	All shades of yellow	*Nasturtium*
Youth and Old Age	Scarlets, pinks, yellow, white	*Zinnia*
Pansies	All colors	*Viola*

THE PERENNIAL FLOWERS THAT ARE THE EASIEST TO GROW

Columbines (Will grow in shade)	Scarlet, blue, white	*Aquilegia*
Peach bells (Will grow in partial shade)	Blue	*Campanula persicifolia*
Coreopsis	Yellow	*Coreopsis*

Larkspur	Blue, light and dark	*Delphinium*
Pinks	All shades of red and pink	*Dianthus plumarius*
Day lilies	Yellow	*Hemerocallis*
Phlox	Reds, pinks and white	*Phlox decussata*
Flag	Blue, white	*Iris*

THE VEGETABLES THAT ARE THE EASIEST TO GROW

Beans (climbing).

"Scarlet Runner" has very pretty bright scarlet flowers.

"Kentucky Wonder" is the most productive, and always tender.

Beans (bush).

"Stringless Green Pod" ripens early and remains tender.

"Currie's Rust-proof Wax" is a tender wax variety. Wait until warm weather to sow in rows 2 feet apart, seeds 6 inches apart.

Beets.

"Crosby's Egyptian" is an early and quick growing variety. Sow as early as ground is warm, 1 inch deep, in rows 16 inches apart, seeds 1 inch apart.

Carrots.

"Early Scarlet horn" is a fine early variety. Sow in April or May in rows 1 foot apart and thin out till plants are 2 inches apart.

Corn.

"Golden Bantam" is a delicious variety. Sow in rows 3 feet apart, after ground is well warmed, dropping seed every 9 inches.

Dandelion.

The common dandelion makes a delicious salad plant. Sow in rows 1 foot apart, and thin out till plants are 10 inches apart in the rows. Put a flower pot over each plant to blanch it.

Radishes.

"French Breakfast" is a quick growing variety. Sow in rows 1 foot apart, dropping seed 1 inch apart in rows. Will mature a crop in six weeks, in light soil. Plant every two weeks all summer.

Salsify.

"Mammoth Sandwich Island" is good. Sow in rows early in spring 15 inches apart and 1 inch deep, seeds 3 inches apart. Leave in ground all winter, but dig before it starts to grow in spring.

Tomatoes.

"June Pink" is an early and long bearing variety. Sow seeds indoors, and transplant to garden in May or early June. Set the plants 5 feet apart each way, and train to poles.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00025733824